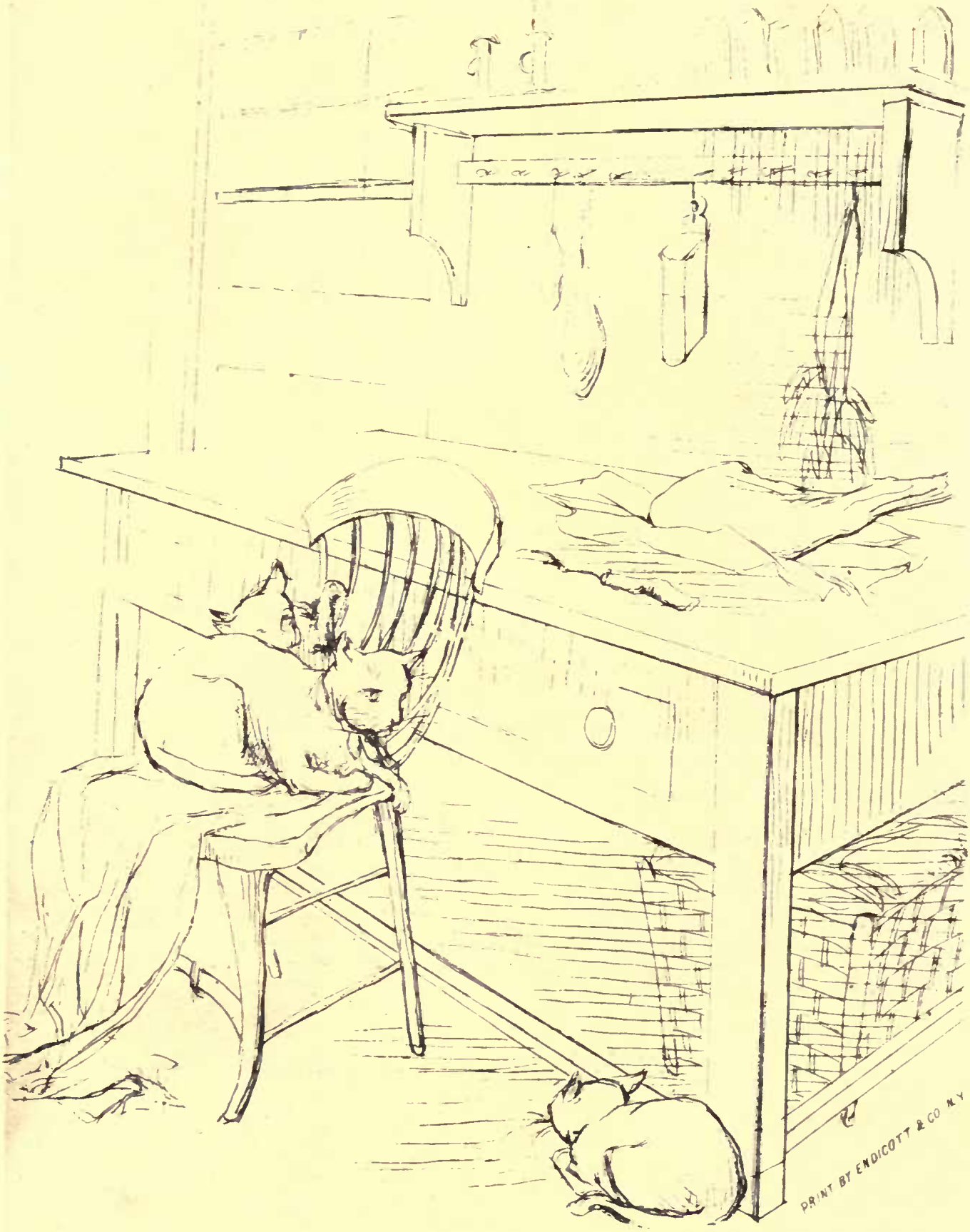

Frontispiece

TABBY'S TRAVELS;

OR,

The Holiday Adventures of a Kitten.

A CHRISTMAS AND NEW-YEAR'S STORY.

"Pussy cat, Pussy-cat, where have you been?"

BY LUCY ELLEN GUERNSEY,

AUTHORESS OF "IRISH AMY," "THE ORPHAN NIECES," "UPWARD AND ONWARD," ETC.

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TO

BENJAMIN AND WILLY RICHARDS,

OF CANANDAIGUA,

THIS LITTLE STORY

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

By their Sincere Friend,

THE AUTHOR.

TABBY'S TRAVELS;

OR,

The Holiday Adventures of a Kitten.

CHAPTER FIRST.

TABBY'S ESCAPE.

I SUPPOSE a pleasanter kitchen was hardly ever seen, than the one in which my story commences. It was not one of those down-cellar places, with little square windows close to the low ceiling, and on a level with the street, or shut in by a grim area-wall, in which so many girls spend all their working-time, without being able to see so much as a square foot of sky, except by twisting their heads half off their shoulders. No; it was a high,

light room, with two large windows, which let in so much light and air, that the geraniums and verbenas on the window-seats flourished as if they had been in a green-house, and looking out upon a square yard, small to be sure, but kept so nicely. and in summer so filled with flowers, that it was a pleasure to look into it. There were no flowers or other growing things to be seen, however, at the time our story commences, for the ground was frozen hard, and covered with a light snow, which a cold wind was driving here and there, and twirling high up into the air, till the flakes caught the sunbeams and glittered like showers of diamonds.

It might be cold out of doors, but it was warm enough in the kitchen, where a good fire was burning in the stove, making the tea-kettle send out clouds of steam, and the cover of the boiler pop up and down, as if there were something alive under it which wanted to get out. Dorothy, the cook, and Anne, the housemaid, had gone into

the dining-room to family prayers, and three cats—that is to say, a cat and two kittens—were the only inmates of the kitchen.

The old cat was sitting up in Dorothy's patch-work cushioned chair, washing her face very demurely and sedately, at the same time keeping her eye on the kittens, that they might not get into any mischief, and be whipped by the cook when she came down stairs—an event which, I am sorry to say, had happened more than once. The two kittens, whose names were Tody and Tabby, were frolicking round the floor, chasing their own and each other's tails, and twisting round and over the rungs of the chairs, till any one might have thought they would certainly have broken their necks. Tody was black and white. His breast, paws, and the tips of his ears and tail were as white as snow, while all the rest of his body was jet black, and shone like satin. He was a very pretty kitten indeed, but not so pretty as Tabby, who was a true tortoise-shell. Her

face and paws were also white, but the rest of her body was curiously mottled with yellow, black, and gray, disposed in spots and stripes, while her tail was regularly ringed with black and yellow down to the tip, which was white. She was a very beautiful kitten indeed, but not so neat as Tody, for her fore-paws were blackened, and there was a great black mark on the side of her face.

"Miaw!" said Tody presently. "Don't bite so hard, Tabby, you hurt me!"

"You always think you are killed, if any one touches you," said Tabby, pettishly. "You have bitten me a great deal harder than that many a time, and I did not mew at all. However, I am not going to play with you if you are going to quarrel all the time." And with these words, Tabby went and sat down by the fire in a very dignified manner.

Tody looked rather sorry, but he did not say any thing. He got up in the chair, by the side

of his mother, and began licking her face and head, now and then playfully biting her ears and pulling her tail.

"I should think mother could wash her own face without any of Tody's help," said Tabby, after watching them a few minutes discontentedly.

"I should think mother could govern her own kittens without any of Tabby's help," returned the old cat good-naturedly, straightening herself up in the chair, and rolling Tody over with her paw. "And, by the way, talking of washing, what makes your paws so black, my daughter?"

"I don't know, I am sure," said Tabby, hastily sitting down, and folding her paws under her. "I must have got them dirty playing round the stove, I suppose."

The old cat jumped down from the chair, and, going up to Tabby, pulled her paws from under her breast, looked at them, smelled of them, and then said, in a tone of grave displeasure: "Tabby, you have been playing in the charcoal-box again!"

Tabby did not attempt to deny it. She hung down her head, and looked very much ashamed.

"You have been playing in the charcoal-box again, though you know I forbade you to go near it," pursued her mother very seriously; "and worse than that, you have been running over cook's baskets, and have left the marks of your black paws upon her clean napkins, which were folded and sprinkled ready for ironing. I should not wonder if she should whip you and make you go without your breakfast, and I should not blame her if she did.

"I really don't know what will become of you, Tabby, if you are such a naughty kitten. Only the day before yesterday you pulled the raw turkey off on the floor, and ate half of its neck, and last Sunday morning you jumped upon the breakfast-table, and turned a cup of coffee all over the clean cloth. You will surely come to a bad end, my daughter, if you are so heedless and disobedient. Once I knew of a kitten

who would persist in getting on the table and into the pantry, and one day the coachman tied her in a bag, with a stone round her neck, and threw her off the railroad-bridge. The river was very high, and she was carried over the falls and drowned."

At the thought of his dear little sister going over the falls in a bag, with a stone tied round her neck, Tody turned quite cold all over. He jumped down from the chair where he had been sitting, and came to his mother.

"Dear mother, pray don't say such dreadful things as that," said he, with tears in his eyes. "I am sure Tabby will be a good kitten, and do as you tell her—won't you, Tabby dear?"

But Tabby made no answer, and went on licking her paws, trying to look as though she did not care, and the old cat, seeing how sulky she was, called Tody away to sit up in the plants among the sunshine, leaving Tabby to her own thoughts by the side of the fire.

Tabby felt very naughty indeed. It was not the first time nor the second that she had been in mischief that week, and she had been twice whipped, once by the cook, for pulling down the turkey, and once by Miss Sophia, in the drawing-room, for jumping upon the commode, and knocking down a little china cup. It was very pretty and round, and Tabby thought she should like to roll it about the floor. She was frightened enough when she saw it break all to pieces, for she knew how much the family valued this cup, which had been sent home by Mr. Edward, all the way from Japan, whither his ship had gone: so terrified, indeed, was she, that she forgot to run away, and so Miss Sophia caught her, and gave her a good whipping with her little whalebone riding-whip, which hung in the hall.

The worst of it was, that no one was sorry for her but Tody; even her mother, though she licked her all over and did what she could to comfort her, told her that she was served right for going where she

had no business, and Tabby, instead of confessing that she had been a naughty pussy, and resolving to do better in future, thought herself a very ill-used cat. She made up her mind that nobody loved her, and that all the world had a spite against her, so that, when Tody came to console her, and brought her a little mouse which the stable-boy had caught and given him, she snatched it up growling, and carried it off without so much as saying, "Thank you."

She had often been told that she must not play in the charcoal, and it was difficult to see why she was so fond of doing so; but all her mother's admonitions and cuffs did no good. This very morning she had jumped into the bin after a feather which she saw there, and had chased it up and down among the coals, till all the under part of her body was as black as the coal itself. She had succeeded in getting rid of most of it, but her paws were too dirty to come clean with one washing, and she had kept out of

the way, hoping her mother would not observe them, till the tell-tale color had worn off.

Presently the cook and house-maid came down from prayers, bringing the breakfast dishes with them, and Dorothy, scraping the contents of the plates together upon a large dish, and pouring some milk into a bowl, called all the cats into the outer kitchen, and set the provision down before them. There were well-buttered buckwheat cakes, some pieces of cold ham and chicken, and quite a quantity of hash, enough to satisfy any reasonable cat, one would think. But Tabby was not in the humor to be pleased with any thing.

"I should think they might have fresh fish for breakfast, sometimes," she said peevishly, turning over the contents of the plate with her paw. "We have not had a bit of fish since I can remember."

"It is not the season for fish," said her mother, "but there is a piece of cold chicken for you. I should think that was a very nice breakfast for a kitten."

Tabby murmured something about being sick of chicken, but took the offered piece nevertheless, and ate it all herself, without offering to divide with Tody, who was very contentedly munching his cakes and hash. She ate so greedily, indeed, that she almost choked herself, and was reproved by her mother for her ill manners. This filled up the cup of her discontent, and she felt as though she should like to do almost any thing that was naughty.

All the morning she sat sullenly by the side of the fire, resisting all the attempts of Tody to entice her into a game of play, and brooding over her fancied wrongs, till she really convinced herself that she was the most ill-used kitten in the whole world. She would not even go up stairs when little Ella and Marian called them all into the nursery for a frolic, and she ran and hid behind the boiler in the cellar, when Ella came after her the second time.

"Go along then, you contrary little thing," said Ella, after she had coaxed and called in vain, till

her patience was exhausted. "I never saw such a kitten in my life. I don't see, for my part, how such a little cross-patch ever came to be Tody's sister." And away she ran, leaving Tabby to come out when she got ready, which she did with her paws blacker than ever, and a great smudge on her side, where she had rubbed against the pots.

"O Tabby! why didn't you come up stairs," said Tody, when he came into the kitchen some time afterward. "You don't know what a nice time we had. Miss Ella rolled her glass balls and marbles all over the floor for us to play with, and gave mother and me each a piece of pound-cake."

"I suppose you would not have saved any for me for the world," said Tabby scornfully.

"I was going to bring you part of mine," said Tody, "but mother wouldn't let me. She said you ought to come when you were called, and if you did not, you must take the consequences."

"Mother thinks I am the very worst kitten that ever lived in the world," said Tabby, tears of

vexation coming into her eyes, as she thought of the pound-cake and the pretty glass balls, her favorite playthings, all lost by her own perversity. "I do believe she would be glad if I were dead and out of the way. But never mind," she continued, not heeding Tody's exclamation of horror at this wicked and undutiful speech; "I shall not be in her way very long. I am not going to stay where I am abused all the days of my life."

In fact, Tabby had thought over her imagined wrongs, till all her musings and broodings had resulted in a settled purpose. She had made up her mind to run away! Yes, to such a pitch had her perversity arrived, that she had determined to leave the kind mother and brother who loved her so dearly, and the friends who had fed and petted her ever since she was born, and go out into the world to seek her fortune. Now, what the world was like, she had no idea. She had never been outside the garden-walls, except when her mother had once or twice taken her and Tody to a neigh-

bor's barn to give them a lesson in mousing, and the only persons she had ever seen besides Mrs. Merriam's family, were the little girls who sometimes came to see Miss Ella, and Miss Marian, and the butcher's boy who now and then gave her a piece of meat out of his basket.

Tabby was a self-willed kitten. She had a great deal of perseverance too, and would never give up any thing she attempted, till she had tried every way to attain the object of her wishes. She knew very well that she should have no trouble in accomplishing her ends this time, for her mother was accustomed to go out for a walk every afternoon, leaving her and Tody to take care of themselves. Tody usually took a nap in the window-seat, and nothing would be easier than, while she was fast asleep, for her to slip out of the kitchen when the door was opened, run along the garden-wall to the neighboring house, which was on the corner, and then jump into the street and go where she pleased.

Having thus made up her mind to escape from what she considered the evils of her lot, and seeing clearly how to bring it about, she was inclined to be very good-natured, and was so playful and pleasant the rest of the morning, that her mother thought she was sorry for her perverseness, and had made up her mind to be good; and very glad she was to see it, for whatever Tabby might imagine in her naughtiness, if her mother made any difference between her kittens, she loved Tabby the best.

Tody was naturally of a very placid and cheerful disposition, and had given her very little trouble. He had also a strong constitution, and had never seen a sick-day, while Tabby was delicate from her birth, and, for some days her mother had considered it doubtful whether she would ever live to get her eyes open. Then she had had two very bad fits in her infancy, and she was almost two months old before she began to grow strong and hearty. This circumstance in-

duced not only her mother, but all the family, to bear with her infirmities of temper, and treat her with great indulgence, and she had been allowed to do many things which would have insured a sentence of banishment against any other cat. She was exceedingly handsome, and very playful, when in a good humor, and the children were quite as fond of her as of Tody, who was never out of temper, and always ready for a game of romps.

But all this had no influence upon Tabby. She had been so mischievous lately, that it had been absolutely necessary to punish her more than once; but instead of seeing that it was her own fault, and amending her ways, she had made up her mind that she was a very ill-used cat, and would be better off almost any where else than at home. This feeling had been brewing in her mind for some time, and the events of the day had brought it to such a point that she was determined to act upon it. How she did so, and what adventures she met with, we shall see hereafter.

As Tabby sat down to her excellent dinner of bread and meat, she could not help having some misgivings, when she reflected that she did not know where she was to get her supper, nor whether she were likely to have any; but she had made up her mind, and she was not a kitten to be easily frightened. So she made a hearty meal, and took a good drink of milk and water as a provision for her journey, and then began to put her fur in order, watching impatiently for the time when she might leave all her troubles behind her, and escape to that unknown future which her fancy pictured to her in such gay and attractive colors.

She did not have to wait long. As if to favor her designs, her mother went out earlier than usual, telling the kittens that she might be gone till after tea, and giving them a great charge not to get into any mischief. It was the day but one before Christmas. The cook was busy baking mince-pies, stuffing her turkey, and getting all

things ready for the Christmas feast. The young ladies of the family, Miss Sophia and Miss Fanny, were finishing up their presents, frosting cakes, and making preparations for the childrens' party on Christmas-eve, and the little girls, Ella and Marian, were too happy in being allowed to help, to care any thing about playing with the kittens.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon. The sun was shining brightly, and it looked very pleasant out of doors, but in the house it was necessary to keep up large fires to make the rooms comfortable. Tabby watched her opportunity when the cook went out into the yard, and slipped out after her, hiding behind the rose-bushes till she went into the house and the door was shut. Then she jumped up on the wall, skipped along the top till she came to where it joined the back wall of her next neighbor, and was just about to jump over, when, to her consternation, she beheld her mother sitting below under some grape-vines, in company with two or

three other cats of the neighborhood. She drew back in haste, afraid lest her mother might have seen her, and sat for some moments hardly daring to breathe. Presently she ventured upon another peep. The mother had not stirred, but was busily engaged in conversation with her friends, and Tabby took courage. Instead of crossing directly into the next street, however, as she had at first intended, she jumped over into the garden which joined the back of Mr. Merriam's, crept along under the wall, then jumped over into the next and the next, nor did she look round till she had put at least half a dozen gardens, and quite a long street, between herself and her fond mother and happy home.

She was now in quite an extensive garden, much larger than any she had passed through, and planted with a variety of evergreens, and other trees and shrubs, such as she had never seen before. Among them was one covered with large bunches of crimson berries, and around

this were gathered many robins, some of which were perched on the branches, while others perched on the snow, picking up the berries which had fallen on the ground. Tabby wagged her tail and chattered her teeth with pleasure at the sight.

"Now for a famous supper," she said to herself, as she crept softly forward in the shadow of a large cedar tree. "If I can get one of these nice large birds, and I am almost certain I can, I need not envy Tody his supper of milk and cold toast. I think cold toast is miserable stuff myself. Now for it!" said she, as, crouching close to the ground, and wriggling her body, she prepared for a spring, already tasting the game in anticipation.

But a bird in the bush is not the same as a bird in the hand, as Tabby learned to her cost. She sprung with all her force, and alighted exactly where she intended, but the bird which she had intended for her supper was quicker than herself.

He saw her as she sprung, and was safely perched upon the top branches of the tree before she reached the place where he had been. All the other robins took the alarm, and when she looked around, after assuring herself that she had missed her aim, every bird had disappeared.

The sun had set, and the piercing wind penetrated her fur, and made her shiver all over. It was getting late; she had had no supper, and she did not know where to turn to find any. Gladly would she have eaten a piece of the cold toast she had so lately despised, and even one of the buckwheat cakes, which she would never condescend to touch. She looked around her, and considered what was best to be done, and at last determined to go boldly up to the house and ask for something to eat.

"It is such a grand house," she reflected, "that I am sure they must have much nicer meals than we used to at home."

Poor Tabby! She had yet to learn that the

comforts of housekeeping are not always proportioned to the size of the house by any means.

She stole gently along toward the kitchen, intending to watch her opportunity and slip in when the door was opened, but she had not reached it by a good many yards, when she heard a savage bark which made her hair stand on end, and in another instant a fierce dog made a dash at her. It was a fortunate thing for Tabby that a tree was close at hand, or my story would have had a sudden termination. Terror lent her wings, and in a moment she was safe among the branches, wondering at her own escape, and feeling almost as if the bull-dog's teeth were already in her back. She was safe, however, for this time; but what to do next? The dog was at the foot of the tree, barking savagely, and every now and then leaping up as if to catch her. It was quite dark; she was chilled through, and ready to faint from hunger. It was very different certainly from the bright future she had portrayed to herself, sitting

by the fire in the nursery, and she began to wish she had staid at home. But it was too late now; she must drink as she had brewed, and the beverage did not seem likely to be very much to her taste.

CHAPTER SECOND.

THE WARRINGTON FAMILY.

TABBY kept hoping that the dog would go away, so as to allow her to come down; but he showed no signs of any intention to do so, keeping watch at the foot of the tree, as though he had made up his mind to have her for his supper at any cost; so Tabby thought at least, for she did not know that dogs never ate cats.

The night grew colder and colder, the wind pierced through her fur, and so benumbed her limbs that she could hardly retain her hold on the branch. She was more hungry than she had ever been in all her life before, and as she thought of her mother and Tody, snug and warm in their nest under the back-room stairs, sleeping soundly after a comfortable supper, she could hardly help mewing aloud.

"Oh!" said she to herself, "how foolish I was! If ever I get back again, I shall know when I am well off. I dare say they are both sound asleep, never thinking or caring what becomes of me."

Tabby knew better in her own mind, but her conscience accused her for her undutiful conduct, and she felt as though it would be a relief to blame somebody beside herself. If she had seen her dear mother hunting for her up stairs and down, and all over the neighborhood, calling her lost child in the most pitiful tones, her hard heart might have been touched; but at present she thought of nothing but her own discomfort and danger. At last, after what seemed an age to the poor kitten, the gate opened, and some one came in whistling to the dog, who started up and ran to meet the new-comer, and then ran back to the tree, looking up at the kitten and then at his master, saying as plainly as a dog could say it: "There is a strange cat up in this tree."

"Why, Carlo, old dog, what are you barking at?" said the young gentleman, looking up into the tree. "Some unlucky cat, I suppose."

"Miaw," ventured Tabby, thinking he looked very good-natured, and resolved on making an appeal to his sympathies. "Miau—au! Miew!"

The result of this experiment proved that she had not been mistaken in her estimate of character. "Down, Carlo, down, old dog," said he to Carlo, and the old fellow immediately crouched down, looking on, however, with much interest to see what his young master was going to do.

"If I had minded my dear mother as well as that, I should not have been in this scrape," was Tabby's passing reflection, as she ventured to descend from the tree at the repeated invitations of the young gentleman, still, however, keeping a watchful eye upon the dog, and ready to betake herself to her place of refuge the moment he showed signs of another attack. No sooner did she come within reach, however, than Mr. Warrington seized

her, and despite her struggles, for she was now almost as much afraid of him as of the dog, he carried her into the house, and introduced her into a warm and light room, where the family were assembled at supper.

"See here, girls," said he, as he held her out by the back of the neck, "here is some company for you."

"Another cat! I do think you are out of your senses, George!" said a young lady who was seated at the table. "You know the children will torment its life out, and a kitten is a nuisance in the house, at any rate."

"We shan't either; that is just like you, Barbara!" said a little girl about the age of Ella Merriam, "always meddling. Do give her to me, George!"

"No, give her to me," exclaimed a younger girl and a boy both together.

"Don't give her to Aggy, give her to me. Aggy has got the parrot now."

"And Dora has got the gold-fish. I think you might give her to me, George."

"I have not said I should give her to any body yet," said George, stroking Tabby, who began to think she had got among a queer set of people.

"I think if I make a present to any one, it will be to Tessy, who has not asked for it at all."

The eyes of the little girl who sat at the end of the table began to sparkle, and she said gratefully: "Thank you, George. I shall like it so much. I have always wanted a tortoise-shell kitten."

"Tessy gets every thing," said Agnes, her pretty face flushing with ill temper. "I wish I was lame, and then perhaps I might get some thing done for me, once in a while."

"For shame, Agnes!" said Barbara. "How can you speak so of your cousin, as though she would be lame if she could help it? I think you have made a wise choice, George, though I am afraid the poor cat will not fare the better for it."

I won't have any quarrelling about it, children,"

said Mrs. Warrington, who had hitherto kept silence. I wish you had not brought her in at all, George; but since you have, you had better let her go into the kitchen and get something to eat."

"O mother! do let us feed her here," exclaimed Dora and Charley together. "Let us give her some milk under the table."

"You know I do not like to have cats fed at the table," Mrs. Warrington began, but her voice was overborne in a torrent of remonstrance.

"Oh! yes, mother! What harm will it do? Old Brindle always ate up here. Do give us some milk for her."

"Well," said Mrs. Warrington resignedly, giving way as usual, "only don't spill the milk on the carpet."

"I think the kitchen is the best place for her, for my part, if she is to stay at all," said Agnes. "A little dirty thing; she is not half as pretty as old Brindle was."

"Agnes thinks the grapes are sour," said Dora,

as she set down a china saucer half full of milk. "She thought it was a beautiful kitten till George gave it to Tessy."

"Dora!" said her mother reprovingly.

"Well, she did, mother, you know she did."

"I wonder what Mrs. Merriam would say if Miss Ella or Miss Marian were to speak to her or to each other in that way?" thought Tabby to herself.

She drank the milk eagerly, and then looked up expecting something more, but nobody offered her any thing, though there was cold meat on the table, and she would have been very glad even of a piece of dry bread. At last the little girl called Tessy took a crust from her plate and offered it to her, but she had hardly seized it, before Agnes and Charley both exclaimed: "There, mother, Theresa is feeding her off her plate!"

"I am surprised at you, Theresa," said Mrs. Warrington, severely. "You know I have forbidden the cats to be fed in the dining-room."

"She looked so hungry," said Tessy in excuse, her pale face flushing at the rebuke.

"Never mind how she looked. I told you once, and that was enough. I shall not let her stay here at all, if that is the way you are going to do."

"I don't see why it was any worse for Tessy than for Dora and Charley," said Barbara half-aside to George. "But, poor girl, she has to take all the governing for the whole concern."

If Mrs. Warrington heard this speech, she did not see fit to notice it, and the whole party rose from the table, leaving Tabby alone in the dining-room, though Tessy looked longingly at her, as though she would have liked to carry her along.

"What acting children!" said Tabby to herself, "and what a cross woman! I am sure I never heard such goings-on at our tea-table, and I think it is a great deal pleasanter than this, though our dishes and tea-pots are not half so

handsome. I think they might have offered me a bit of that cold meat; I am half-starved. I mean to have a piece at any rate."

So saying, she mounted upon a chair, and was just reaching out her paw to the dish, when the door opened suddenly, and Agnes came in. Tabby made a hasty jump, and in her confusion, not seeing where she was going, she knocked a cup off the table, and broke it in two, besides spilling the tea all over the cloth.

"Oh! ho! Miss Kitty! So that is the way you behave, is it?" said Agnes, seizing upon her as she tried to make her escape under the sideboard. We shall see what mother will say to that!" and despite Tabby's efforts, she was carried off a prisoner to the drawing-room.

"Here is your beautiful tortoise-shell kitten, Miss Tessy! She has been up on the table, eaten all the cold meat, and broken two or three cups and saucers!" Such was Agnes' announcement, made in a tone of ill-natured triumph, as she en-

tered the drawing-room, with Tabby squeezed under her arm.

"Oh! what a story!" thought Tabby, as she struggled to escape from the pressure of Agnes' elbow. "I never touched the cold meat, and I only broke one cup."

"So much for bringing a strange cat into the house," said Mrs. Warrington in displeasure, and looking at Theresa as though she were the cause of all the mischief. "I will have her sent off or put out of the way to-morrow."

"Stop, mother. Remember she is my cat," said George. "I am not sure I shall have her disposed of so summarily. It was not right to leave her alone in the room with the meat. I dare say she was half-starved, poor thing."

"If you had given her to Agnes, she would not have been so ready to tell of her," said Dora. "Tabby is not the first who has taken things off the table." Tabby was quite suprised to hear herself called by her name, not knowing that

it was one commonly applied to tortoise-shell cats.

"It is no worse to take things off the table than out of the cupboard," retorted Agnes.

"You need not squeeze the poor thing so, at any rate," said Charley, trying to pull Tabby away; but Agnes held her fast, and the poor kitten began to think she would be torn in pieces between them. She uttered such a pitiful cry, that Tessy started from her chair and exclaimed, as her eyes filled with tears: "Oh! don't hurt her so, poor little thing! Give her to me, please, Charley," she added imploringly, as Charley succeeded in gaining possession of her.

Charley hesitated, but he saw his elder brother's eye fixed upon him, and he had his reasons for not caring to disoblige George so near to Christmas-time. "Take her, then," he said rather sullenly, holding her out to Theresa, who took her and began smoothing her fur, ruffled by the vio-

lence of the children; "but I don't believe mother will let you keep her—will you, mother?"

"I certainly shall not have her about, if she gets on the table," said Mrs. Warrington with decision. "I think if people must have a cat, the barn is the best place for her. You had better take her out now, Charley, before she does any more mischief."

"Wait till Tessy goes to bed, mother," interposed Barbara, who had left the room a few minutes before, and now came back in time to hear her mother's last words. "The kitten has not done much harm after all. She has only broken that cup which has been cracked this long time, and the meat is quite untouched. I would learn to tell a story straight, if I were Agnes."

"I would learn to mind my own affairs if I were Barbara," retorted Agnes, vexed that her sister should expose her exaggerations.

"Hush, Agnes," said her mother. "I am glad it was no worse. That cup has been unfit to be

seen this long time, and so I have told Jane, but she would always put it on. I am really glad it is out of the way. You can keep the kitten till bed-time, Tessy, if you like, but don't let her get on any of the tables here."

Tabby had not the least inclination to get out of the lap of her kind little protectress, who stroked her so softly, and allowed her to lie quietly and recover her breath, after the rough treatment to which she had been subjected. By and by Tabby began to regain her spirits, to wash herself and to purr in answer to Tessy's gentle caresses. She had hardly ever been willing to lie in Ella Merriam's lap, though her little mistress never punished her in her life, but she was beginning to know a little of the value of kindness. The children took very little more notice of her, but busied themselves with some games and puzzles, quarrelling and snapping at each other every few minutes. George and Barbara played chess and talked to each other, and Mrs. Warrington sat at

a little table under the gas-light, and busied herself with some very curious-looking knitting. Tessy had her knitting too, but she spent most of her time patting and talking to Tabby, who now began to show off some of her accomplishments in the line of playing. At last Tessy's ball rolled out of her lap, and Tabby jumped after it, and brought it back in her mouth, as Marian had taught her to do. Tessy clapped her hands with delight.

"See, aunt—see, George! she has brought my ball back to me. What a dear little kitty!"

"I don't believe she did it on purpose," said Charley. "Try her again, Tessy." Tessy rolled the ball and Tabby sprang after it, bringing it in her mouth as before, and jumping up into Tessy's lap.

"She is a cunning little thing," said Mrs. Warrington, after the experiment had been successfully repeated a number times. "I never saw a cat do as much as that."

Tabby was delighted to see the effect of the favor-

able impression she had made, and tried the effect of her other grand feats, sitting up very straight on her hind legs, and putting her paws over her nose, as she had seen her mother do when begging for something to eat. She even went so far as to lie down on her back and roll over, a feat she had always been very unwilling to perform for Miss Ella, but she felt the necessity of making herself agreeable in her new situation. Every one, even Agnes, agreed that she was a very pretty kitten, and wonderfully clever, but no one talked of getting her any thing to eat, as she had hoped they would do, and when bed-time came, Mrs. Warrington gave her to Charley, and ordered him to give her to Jem to be carried out to the barn.

"Won't Carlo kill her if she is put out in the barn?" Tessy remonstrated.

"Oh! she can get up on the beams out of his way," replied Mrs. Warrington, carelessly.

Tessy still looked very unhappy, and George remarking it, took the kitten from Charley's hands,

saying to Tessy: "I will carry her out myself, and give Carlo a lesson on the subject. I will engage that he shall not touch her if I tell him not to. They will be the best friends in the world in a week's time."

"Friends with that horrible great dog! That, I am sure I never shall," said Tabby to herself. "O my dear mother! what would you say if you knew that I was going to be put into such a place?" And for the first time Tabby began to wish she had been a better kitten.

George carried her out to the barn, and setting her down, called Carlo to him, who came out of his nest rather unwillingly. His eyes glistened when he saw the kitten, and he licked his great jaws in a way that made poor Tabby feel as though she were already devoured. Mr. George sat down on a box, and placing the kitten on his knee, he called Carlo up to him.

"See here, Carlo," said he, as Carlo came slowly along, "I want to show you this kitten. This is

my kitten, and you must not hurt her. Do you hear?"

Carlo turned his head round as far as he could, so as not to see Tabby, but Mr. George forced him to look at her.

"Now remember!" said he, as he set the kitten down on the floor under his nose, "you must not hurt her yourself, nor let any other dog meddle with her. You must take good care of her."

Carlo looked at the kitten and then at his mas ter, wagged his tail, and nodded his head, as much as to say, "I will do as you tell me;" and George, satisfied that he would keep his word, took up the lantern and went out of the barn, shutting the door after him. No sooner was he gone than Tabby bounced up to the top of the manger, spitting and spreading out her tail, and making a tremendous fuss, as though she were going to eat somebody up in a moment. But Carlo only grinned good-naturedly, and went off to his bed in the straw, leaving Tabby to settle herself for the night as she pleased.

She did not feel like settling at all, for she had never slept away from her mother and Tody before, and besides she was very hungry, having eaten nothing since dinner except the milk the children had given her. Tabby had never caught a mouse in her life, though she had eaten two or three and liked them very much; and she now began to speculate on the possibility of procuring one for her supper. She looked about a little, and seeing a very promising looking hole under the manger, she settled herself to watch, as she had seen her mother do. She had not been long on the look-out, before a sharp nose and a pair of whiskers peeped out of the hole followed by a head and part of a body.

If Tabby had considered a moment, she would have seen that the head was much too large for that of a mouse; but she thought of nothing but her supper, and springing at the intruder, she seized him by the ears. In a moment she felt a sharp pain in her face, and discovered that she was

caught in her turn by an enormous rat, very nearly as large as herself. In vain did she struggle and scratch; the rat held on, and presently another brown head was seen peering from the same hole.

Poor Tabby now gave herself up for lost, but at that moment she received efficient aid from a very unexpected quarter. Carlo had come out of his nest on hearing the scuffle, and seeing the state of the case, he bounced in among the combatants. The rats quickly retreated to their holes, leaving Tabby ready to faint from fear and fatigue.

"That rat had very nearly finished you, little kitty," said Carlo, after he had hunted through the straw, and smelt at the hole, to make sure that the enemy had left the field. "If I had not come in just as I did, he would have killed you as sure as a gun."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you, Carlo," said poor Tabby, as soon as she could find breath; "I thought it was all over with me when I saw the second rat coming. Just see how he has bitten my face."

"It is too bad!" said Carlo, giving the little face a compassionate lick with his great red tongue. "You should not try to catch rats yet, Tabby, you are quite too little. I should think a mouse would be quite as much as you could manage."

"I wish I could catch a mouse, any way," said Tabby with her eyes full of tears, as she licked the blood off her paws and breast. "I am so hungry I don't know what to do. O my dear mother! if I ever get back to you, I will be a better kitten than I have been."

"How did you come to leave your mother?" asked Carlo. "Did some one steal you, or did your people give you away?"

"I ran away," said Tabby, feeling very much ashamed as she made the confession. "I thought they did not use me well at home, and that it would be a very fine thing to seek my fortune; but if all the world is like what I have seen since dinner-time, I don't want to know any more about it. I am sure I never saw Miss Ella and Miss

Merriam quarrel as the children here do." And then Tabby stopped, all at once remembering how she had quarrelled with Tody that very morning.

"The world is a large place, and there are a great many different sorts of people in it," said Carlo, thoughtfully. "I think if one has even a tolerably good home, it is best to stay in it while one can, and not try to improve one's condition by running away, one don't know where. But if you want to catch a mouse, there are plenty in this barn. I will show you where to watch, and I have no doubt you will find one before a great while. Just call me if the rats trouble you again. Good night."

Carlo showed Tabby a proper place to watch, and then lay down to sleep, but it was not till after two hours of patient waiting, and one or two disappointments, that she succeeded in catching a tolerably-sized mouse. Nothing that she had eaten in her life ever tasted half so good to her as this mouse; she only wished it had been twice as large;

and having eaten all but the tail, she washed her face and paws, as her mother had taught her to do after meals, and then went and curled down in the straw close to Carlo, feeling as though his presence would be a protection, for she felt very friendless and lonely. Her face pained her very much at first, but it grew easier by degrees, and at last she fell asleep, and slept soundly till morning.

She was roused by the entrance of the stable-boy, who was very much surprised to see a kitten lying asleep between Carlo's paws. It was not long before a little lame step, and the sound of a crutch was heard upon the brick walk outside, and Tabby, guessing by instinct to whom they belonged, ran to the door, and met Theresa, who had come out to seek her as soon as she was dressed.

"Oh! my dear little kitty! how glad I am to see you," she exclaimed, resting her crutch against the stable-door, and taking Tabby up in

her arms. "But how did you hurt your poor little face so badly? Carlo, you naughty dog, did you bite my poor pussy?"

"I don't believe it was Carlo, Miss Theresa," said Jem; "I rather guess a rat did that. I found her and Carlo sleeping on the straw together, as good friends as you please."

If it had been in Tabby's power, she would have told Tessy how Carlo had taken her part against the rats, and showed her how to catch a mouse for her supper; but she could not make her little mistress understand such a long story, so she had to content herself with rubbing her head against the old dog's legs, and looking up in his face to show that they were good friends. Tessy was very much pleased at this exhibition of good feeling between her two favorites; and taking Tabby in her arms, and followed by Carlo, she was soon at the kitchen-door, begging the cook to give her some cold meat for their breakfast.

Now Tessy, even in the short time she had been

in her aunt's family, had become a great favorite with all the servants, from her kindness and her obliging manners, and they were all ready to do any thing in their power for the little lame girl, who took such good care of her things and never made them any unnecessary trouble. So as soon as Martha heard what it was that Tessy wanted, she went into the pantry and soon returned with a plateful of bits of cold meat and potatoes, bread-crumbs and other scraps, which she set down before the hungry animals. Tabby ate her share very thankfully, and did not grumble when Carlo took a large part of the meat for his share, leaving her the cold potatoes and crumbs. Could this be the same kitten who only twenty-four hours before had turned up her nose so scornfully at the cold hash, and would hardly condescend to eat a bit of chicken? Yes, but Tabby had learned more wisdom in that twenty-four hours than in all her life before; for she had learned to know when she was well off, and to appreciate the goodness

of her kind mother and brother. She almost choked over her breakfast as she thought of Tody, and imagined how lonely he must be with nobody to play with; and she resolved, that as soon as the weather moderated a little, she would find her way home, tell her mother how sorry she was, and endeavor to make amends for giving her so much trouble.

As Tessy stood leaning on her crutch, watching Tabby and Carlo, some one called her from the top of the stairs, and looking up, at the sound, she saw her cousin Barbara.

"What are you doing in the kitchen so early, Tessy?" asked Miss Warrington.

"I am feeding my kitten," said Tessy. "The rats have bitten her terribly; at least, Jem says it is the rats, and I don't like to have her stay in the barn, but I don't know what to do with her."

"Why don't you take her into the play-room?" asked Barbara.

"I would," replied Tessy, "but—" she hesitated, and Barbara seemed to understand her.

"I know; but never mind, Tessy, try to keep the peace as long as you stay. Remember we shall go away after the holidays, and I am sure you will like being at school. You can take the kitten into my room, and play with her there in peace, for the children are all going out directly after breakfast. I know they are troublesome little torments, but it can not be helped.

Theresa felt very grateful for the permission, but as she picked up Tabby, and followed her cousin up stairs to her own room, she could not help thinking that Barbara did not always take the best way to help it, and that she might do a good deal to improve matters if she went to work in the right way.

Tessy had been used to a very different state of things. Her father and mother had been dead a long time, and she and her two little brothers had resided with an aunt, who took care of them.

Tessy could not recollect having quarrelled with her brothers but twice in her life, and both times when they were all very little children. She well remembered how sorry and ashamed she had felt, and how glad they had all been to kiss and be friends again. When her good aunt died, and her brothers were placed in situations proper for them, she had been in some degree consoled for the distress of parting, by the idea that in her cousins she should have companions of her own age, and little girls too. But she had not been long in her aunt's family before she discovered that it was very possible for "children of one family" to be any thing but pleasant companions. Agnes, Dora, and Charley quarrelled from morning till night. If Dora particularly liked any of her schoolmates, it was reason enough for Agnes to dislike her; and she never failed to take every opportunity of displaying her feelings. Dora, in her turn, hated all Agnes' pets, declaring that Madge, the parrot, was a perfect nuisance, and

Mary Parker, Agnes' favorite playmate, the most disagreeable girl she had ever seen in her life. Charley was his mother's pet, and, secure in her favor, he teased every one in the house, except his brother George, of whom he stood considerably in awe.

Mrs. Warrington was an indolent woman, who loved her children in a passive way, especially when they were small; but she could never take the trouble to teach, much less to govern them. The only approach she ever made to the latter, was to threaten to send them to bed if they quarrelled; but as she never put her threat into execution, it did not have much effect in stopping their contentions. Barbara and George were only her step-children. They were about eight years old when she married Mr. Warrington, and had been kept at school almost ever since, only meeting in the holidays. They were twins, extremely fond of each other, and caring very little for any other society when together; they were, in a measure,

independent of the circle at home, even of their step-mother, who, however, always treated them very kindly in her passive way, and to whom they were generally respectful.

Barbara had very little influence with her brothers and sisters, and did not act in a way to increase it, for she did not take pains to conceal her opinion that they were, as she expressed it, "troublesome little torments." George had more, and used it more wisely, and he did now and then succeed in putting a stop to their endless contentions. Agnes was sometimes induced to give up her own way, and Dora to cease her sarcastic speeches, and even Charley to restrain his fit of passion, when his older brother's calm eye was fixed upon him, especially about Christmas-time; for George was abundantly supplied with pocket-money, and made a very wise as well as a very generous use of it.

It was into such a family as this that Tessy was introduced to spend the remainder of her life, at least till she should have a home of her own. It

may be easily believed that she did not find it very pleasant. She was, as one of the servants expressed it, like a cat without claws in the midst of her young cousins, and most thankful she was when her aunt and her guardian decided that she was to go to boarding-school with Barbara after the Christmas holidays.

She looked forward to the beginning of school as to a haven of rest, and meantime devoted all her powers to the endeavor to keep the peace, and gain some influence with Agnes and Dora, which might be to their advantage. She was three years older than Agnes, the eldest, and wonderfully skillful with her needle, and in a hundred little arts interesting to children, such as cutting out and painting paper dolls and birds, making little boxes and baskets of all sorts of materials, dressing dolls, etc., all of which she turned to good account. Sometimes, it is true, Agnes and Dora united their forces against her, and then she fared badly, for her aunt never would believe but that she was the person

most to blame; but generally, she filled the not very enviable position of mutual friend in the family.

Dora and Agnes often came to her with their complaints of each other, of their teachers and schoolmates, and even of their mother, for whom, as may well be imagined, they had no very deep respect. In all these cases Tessy smoothed away and softened down, and did her best to reconcile the contending parties, it must be confessed with varying success. She had been from the first a great favorite with George and Barbara, who took her part upon all occasions, somewhat to the displeasure of their mother, who could seldom see that her own children were to blame, and a good deal to the jealousy of Agnes and Dora.

Tessy followed her cousin up stairs to her own pleasant and nicely furnished bed-room, where the children were only allowed to come on particular invitation. No sooner was Tabby released, than, according to the custom of cats, she began an

examination of every piece of furniture in the room.

"I wonder why cats always do that when they are taken into a strange place?" said Tessy.

"I suppose they want to make themselves acquainted with their surroundings," replied Barbara; "just as you and I should do if we were taken into a strange house to live. She is a wonderfully pretty kitten, I must allow. I dare say somebody is sorry enough to lose her."

"Perhaps she was sent away," observed Tessy. "I have known of people losing kittens on purpose, when they want to get rid of them."

"I think that is a very cruel thing to do," replied Barbara. "I should rather have one killed at once, than subject it to the chances of being starved or frozen to death; and beside that, I never can get over the fancy, that such animals have enough of human feeling about them to be distressed and hurt at ill treatment. But come, there is the breakfast-bell!"

Tessy and Barbara accordingly went down stairs, leaving Tabby in possession of the luxurious apartment and the bright coal-fire, all of which seemed doubly pleasant to her after her night in the barn.

"What a beautiful room!" she said to herself, as she took possession of a velvet-covered ottoman by the fire, and began cleaning her face and paws, which still bore traces of her yesterday's adventure. "There is not a room in our house so handsomely furnished, and the carpet is just like velvet; but for all that, I like our house the best. Miss Ella and Miss Marian do not wear as handsome frocks as Agnes and Dora, but they are a great deal prettier, and I am sure there is no comparison as to behavior. But I need not say any thing about that, after being so naughty myself. O my dear Tody! if I once get back to you, I will never quarrel with you again."

Tabby was deeply sunk in these and similar reflections, when she imagined she heard a familiar

mew, and she jumped down and ran to the window. It was shut, and the blinds closed, but as she listened she heard the sound again. It was beyond question her mother's voice! She had come to look for her kitten—her lost kitten, who, shut up in this splendid prison, had no means of rejoining, or even of communicating with her.

Tabby was almost distracted. She ran to the other window. The blinds of this were only partly closed, and through the space between the slats she saw her mother carefully looking about under the roses and evergreens, and now and then calling her in tones that went to her very heart.

Poor Tabby! She mewed as loud as she could in answer, but the room was in the third story, and the glass in the window was too thick for her voice to penetrate. She scratched at the door like a mad creature, and even tried to break the window, with the desperate intention of jumping down at all hazards; but in vain.

All the time she saw her mother seeking her in

every corner, and even looking up at the very window where she was. What was her horror, when she saw Carlo, who was lying on the back-piazza, suddenly arouse himself, and make a furious dash at her beloved parent!

Tabby gave a shriek which might have been heard even out to the garden, and shut her eyes in terror; but when she opened them again, and dared to peep out, her mother was no where to be seen, and Carlo was walking back towards the house, looking decidedly crest-fallen, and with three great scratches on his nose.

This relieved her mind of a little of its anxiety, for she thought if her mother had been killed, her body would be seen; but the next moment she was conscious of a sickening sense of disappointment. She had intended carefully to watch her mother's motions and mark which way she went, and as soon as she should be at liberty, follow in her footsteps, hoping thus to find her way home again. This hope was now frustrated, and she

was as much at a loss as ever; so after satisfying herself that her mother was no where to be seen, she went slowly and sorrowfully back to her seat by the side of the fire, and endeavored to forget her troubles in sleep.

Meantime the party down stairs were busily talking over their plans for the day. Agnes and Dora were going out shopping together, to buy their Christmas presents. Barbara intended to do the same by herself, and Charley also had a plan of his own. None of the children asked Theresa what she was going to do, and she was not sorry to be overlooked. She intended to spend the morning in Barbara's room, finishing some scarfs she had been knitting for George and Charley, and putting the last touches to a toilet-cushion for her aunt.

The breakfast hour was much pleasanter than usual, for the thought of the day's enjoyment kept Agnes and Dora in a good humor, and Charley was restrained from any of his ordinary outbreaks

of temper by the fear of losing his Christmas present from George.

In the midst of the breakfast, the door-bell was rung, and the servant brought in two notes, one directed to the Misses Warrington, and the other more particularly to Miss Barbara Warrington. The first proved to be an invitation from Mrs. Merriam to the Misses Warrington for Christmas eve—the other was a note from Fanny Merriam to Barbara, asking her to come over with the children, and help to entertain the little party.

"What have you to wear, Tessy?" asked Barbara, as the other girls were discussing their dresses with their mother, and proving, beyond dispute, that it was absolutely necessary for them to have new sashes and shoes.

Before Tessy could reply, Agnes answered for her.

"Why, Barbara, Tessy isn't invited. It says 'the Misses Warrington.'"

"Well, and is not Tessy Miss Warrington?"

"I don't believe Mrs. Merriam meant to ask her, any way," persisted Agnes. "Why should she? She has never seen her, and Tessy don't know Ella and Marian at all. Do you think she did, mother?"

"I don't know, I am sure," replied Mrs. Warrington absently, her attention being again absorbed by the newspaper she was reading between her sips of coffee.

"I know, mother," said Barbara decidedly. "Fanny says in her note to me: 'Be sure and bring your cousin Theresa, for the girls are very anxious to make her acquaintance.' So you see that settles it."

Agnes had one of those amiable tempers which always resents as an insult the being proved to be mistaken, even in the most trifling matter. Moreover, she remembered what she had said to Ella, about Tessy's being a poor relation, dependent upon her mother's bounty, though she knew very well that it was untrue. In fact, these very re-

marks had been the cause of the particular invitation given to Tessy, Mrs. Merriam concluding from what she knew of the family, that a dependent must have an unpleasant life among them.

"Well, I suppose Tessy will do as she likes, she always does, but I should not think she would want to go."

"I won't go, if you don't want me to, Agnes," said Tessy with more spirit than she usually showed.

"Nonsense! you shall go, too," said Barbara. "I want you to take care of me and keep me out of mischief. Come up stairs, and let me look at your frocks and see what is best for you to wear." She drew Tessy out of the breakfast-room as she spoke, but not so quickly as to prevent her hearing Agnes' observation: "Well, if I were wearing as deep mourning as Tessy is, I should not want to go to parties, I am sure."

"Never mind what Agnes says," said Barbara,

seeing Tessy's eyes filled with tears. "You know she can not bear to be contradicted about the least thing. I want you very much to be acquainted with Ella and Marian, who are two of the sweetest little girls I know. I am sure you will enjoy yourself, and it would not be civil to Mrs. Merriam to refuse such a particular invitation, unless you had some very good reason."

Tessy yielded to the force of this last argument, and they went up stairs together to inspect the frocks. The best bombazine was, after a critical examination, pronounced in perfect order, and just the thing, with short sleeves and cambric ruffles, and Barbara only decided that her own present to Tessy should be a jet necklace. These all-important matters settled, Tessy returned to her cousin's room, rejoicing in the prospect of spending a quiet and happy morning with her work, her books, and Tabby, to whom she was already much attached.

CHAPTER THIRD.

THE PARTY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

When Tessy came back to her room, she found Tabby looking very sad and unhappy indeed. She recovered her spirits, however, by degrees, under Tessy's petting and coaxing, for the hearts of kittens are very light by nature, and before long she was in the midst of a very great frolic, running after a ball and bringing it in her mouth, chasing her tail, and doing every thing in her power to make herself agreeable. She did not forget what she had lately beheld, and every now and then, she jumped upon the window-seat to try if she could see any thing more of her mother, but no traces of her appeared, and she concluded that she had gone home to Tody.

It was not till after dinner that Tabby found an

opportunity of slipping out of the house unperceived, when she found to her great regret that it was snowing furiously, and drifting, so that she could not see two yards before her. Tabby was not a kitten to be daunted by trifles, but the short excursion from the back-steps to the barn, convinced her that it would be utter madness to attempt to find her way home in such a storm, and she reluctantly put off her journey till better weather.

"Well, Tabby," said old Carlo, as she entered the stable, "this is hard weather, isn't it? Enough to freeze your little toes off."

"O Carlo!" exclaimed Tabby, unheeding the remark, "how could you chase my dear mother so? I shall never like you again—never!"

"Was that your mother?" asked Carlo, looking very much concerned. "I am sure I would not have chased her if I had known that. I suppose she came to look for you?"

"She did—she did!" exclaimed poor Tabby,

almost choked by the violence of her feelings; "and I was shut up in the third story, in Miss Barbara's room, and could not even make her hear me. Oh! what shall I do?"

Carlo felt very much grieved to see his little friend in such a state, and did his best to comfort her, but in vain.

"You did not hurt her, did you, Carlo?" asked Tabby as soon as she could speak.

"No, indeed!" replied, Carlo looking rather ashamed, "I was the one that got hurt in that instance. I never saw such a cat in my life. Instead of running away as they usually do, she flew right at my face, and almost scratched my eyes out. I was glad enough to let her get away as she liked. I did not see which way she went, but I rather think she jumped over the wall by the great grape-vine. Was that the way you came?"

"No, I believe I came over by the tall cedar in the other corner; but you frightened me so, chas-

ing me up in the tree, that I don't exactly remember. But what made you do it? What is the use of always hunting cats?"

"Why, you see," replied Carlo, "my general orders are to drive away all strange animals from the yard and garden, whether they are cats or cows. But I do assure you, Tabby, if I had known it was your mother come to look for you, I would not have meddled with her on any account, so I hope you won't bear malice."

Tabby could not bear malice against her good friend Carlo, who had saved her from the rats, and given her part of his breakfast; so she rubbed her head against his legs in token of forgiveness, and then consulted him on the best course to take in order to find her way home again.

Carlo thought that as soon as the storm ceased, she had better go to the corner where she thought she first came over, and try to remember which way she had come.

"That is, if you are determined upon going,

Tabby," he concluded. "For my own part, I would advise you to stay where you are. You are tolerably well off here—to be sure, the children are not very pleasant, especially when Miss Barbara and Mr. George are away; but after all, one can get on reasonably well, with a little management: there is enough to eat and drink, and if it is not pleasant in the house, you can always come to the stable. If you start to go home, you are not sure of finding your house after all, and there is no telling to what dangers you may be exposed by the way, from strange dogs, and boys, and even old cats, who often treat kittens very roughly. I would make myself contented if I were you, and I promise you you shall never want a friend while I am here."

Tabby shook her head.

"You are very kind, Carlo, but you don't know how I feel about it. I would run any risk for the sake of finding my dear mother, if it were

only to tell her how sorry I am for being so naughty, and making her so much trouble."

Carlo saw it was no use arguing with Tabby, and wisely refrained from saying any more to dissuade her, but he exacted a promise from her that she would not stir till the weather became warmer, thinking that by that time she might become more contented.

Tabby readily gave the required pledge, and then set herself to exploring the barn. She had become quite fearless from her adventures, and did not hesitate to run up the partition between the stalls, and over the heads of the great gray carriage-horses, who looked good-naturedly at their little visitor, as they champed their oats.

Tabby had the curiosity to nibble a little at the hay, but she thought it very poor food, and wondered that such large animals could subsist upon such diet. She did not know that oats and hay were as good to them, as meat and milk to herself. "But after all," she considered, "it is an excel-

lent thing that they do like it, for I am sure there would never be meat enough in the world to keep them alive."

Then she explored the hay-lofts, where she caught two mice, one of which she offered to Carlo, not without a pang of regret, as she thought how ungrateful she had been for those her kind mother had provided for her.

Carlo thanked her politely, but declined the dainty. He did not like mice, he told her, so she had a fine feast.

She could not but allow that a dinner earned by her own exertions tasted sweeter than one provided by other hands, however kind, and resolved that she would keep up her industrious habits after she returned home. Then she had a great frolic with a ball of string which she found in one corner, while Carlo and the horses looked on, amused by her gambols; and finally finding out a soft bed on a wolf-skin robe, she lay down and went to sleep.

The snow-storm raged fiercely all the afternoon and evening, but it did not prevent the large party of invited guests from assembling at Mrs. Merriam's, where the warm fires and bright lights seemed all the warmer and brighter from their contrast to the darkness and cold without.

Barbara and her party were the first to arrive, Fanny Merriam having expressly desired her friend to come early. All the children looked very pretty in their gay dresses, bare arms, and curls—Tessy among the prettiest. Her frock was of plain bombazine with crape trimmings, for she was wearing very deep mourning for her aunt; but it was neat and unwrinkled, and the crimped cambric ruffles around her shoulders and arms were as white and fresh as a lily. Her usually pale face was lighted up with the glow and smile of pleasure, and her little crutch seemed to be no hindrance to her movements, as she joined in the active games of her companions. Mrs. Merriam thought she had never seen a more attractive girl,

and Ella and Marian felt themselves particularly drawn towards her, remembering a time, not very long past, when they had themselves worn mourning for a dear little baby brother.

At last, in a pause of the games, Ella exclaimed:

"Only think, Miss Barbara, we have lost our beautiful tortoise-shell kitten. She went away day before yesterday, and we can not find out what has become of her, though we have hunted all round the neighborhood. The old cat mourns for her from morning till night, and spends all her time looking for her, and poor Tody is so lonely he will scarcely play at all."

Agnes and Dora looked at each other, and Agnes made her cousin a signal for silence, but Theresa disregarded it, and exclaimed—

"Why, there was a tortoise-shell kitten came to our house yesterday—perhaps it is the very same."

"I don't believe it is the same," said Agnes,

looking angrily at Theresa. "How should your kitten come over at our house?"

"She might," said Ella, "if she had wandered away and got lost. What sort of a kitten was it, Theresa?"

Theresa gave a minute and animated description of her pet, which was found to agree point by point with that of the missing Tabby.

"I am sure it must be our kitten," said Marian, clapping her hands. "Oh! how glad I am that she is found! You will keep her for us, won't you, Theresa, and we will come for her as soon as we can."

"To be sure," said Theresa, suppressing a little sigh at the thought of losing her pet, and then brightening up, as she reflected how soon she was going away herself. "I am glad she has found her home again. She is the cunningest little kitten I ever saw, and so good-natured."

She must have improved in that respect since she left home," said Ella, laughing. "We al-

ways thought her very cross, but perhaps that was only because Tody is so remarkably amiable."

"You must come after her pretty soon, if you want her, Ella," observed Agnes, vexed at her cousin, and unable entirely to conceal her habitual disposition. "She is such a thief, and so troublesome, that mother thinks she will have to send her away. She gets upon the table, and breaks dishes, and does all sorts of bad things."

"Oh! don't send her away, please!" exclaimed Ella and Marian both together. "Let her stay in the barn or somewhere till we can come for her."

"Of course she shall," said Barbara, who had been listening to the latter part of the conversation. "Agnes rather exaggerated her offense, Ella. She only jumped upon the table once, and the cup she broke was of no value. I will see that she is safely kept for you."

"May be you will, and may be you won't," said Agnes to herself. "There are two words to that bargain, Miss Barbara."

"Miss Fanny," said a little girl, "are not cats a kind of tigers?"

Two or three of the children laughed rather rudely at this question, but the little girl was not abashed.

"I am sure I have read some such thing in one of my books," said she. "I do not see what there is to laugh at."

"Nor I," said Miss Fanny. "It is a very sensible question, Minny, though it would be more correct to say that tigers are a species of cat. Lions and tigers, with leopards, panthers, lynxes, and all the smaller varieties, belong to one great family, which naturalists call the genus *felis*, or the cat tribe."

"Then our little kittens are cousins to lions and tigers," observed Ella. "How funny! But sister, why do they put so many animals together in one class, and all so unlike?"

"Because, unlike as they appear to you, there are more points of likeness than of difference," re-

plied Miss Fanny, "as you would see if you were to examine them closely."

"I know lions have a good many of the actions of cats," said Tessy, "and so have panthers. Once I saw an old panther and two cubs in a large cage together, and they played with their mother and each other, and washed their faces and paws, exactly like great kittens."

"There are many other points of resemblance," said Miss Fanny. "You have all observed how peculiar the cat's paw is. Feel it when she is at rest or good-natured, and it is like velvet; you would not think she had any claws: but tease her, or give her something to eat, and you will soon see her talons. All the cat tribe have these *retractile* claws as they are called—that is, their claws when not in use, are drawn back into a sheath, which covers them, and keeps them from being blunted by walking. All the family have also the same number and kind of teeth; they have all smooth, short fur and long whiskers, and are very

cleanly in their habits. They all seize their prey in the same way, by stratagem or surprise, and prefer to hunt in the night."

"Cats can see in the night as well as in the daytime," said the little girl who had spoken first.

"Yes, as well or better; and their eyes are beautifully contrived for that purpose. Look at a cat's eyes by a strong light, and you will see the pupil—that is to say, the dark hole in the middle of the eye—contracted to a narrow line, so as to let in but a few of the rays at once; but carry the animal into a dark room, and you will see the pupil expand so as to cover almost the whole eye. This is more or less true of all eyes belonging to the higher orders of animals, but all have not that great sensibility which enables the cat to see perfectly well in what is pitch darkness to us. Observe, too, their slender forms, and delicate yet muscular limbs, which enable them to walk without making the slightest noise, or to spring with crushing force upon their prey, and you will ad-

mit that they are admirably adapted to the kind of life they are intended to lead."

"It must have taken a great deal of sense to contrive a cat!" said little Minny very seriously.

"You may say the same of any animal, my dear Minny," replied Miss Fanny, "and the more you study natural history, which means the study of all things in nature, the more you will be struck with the care with which all species, not only of animals but of plants, are adapted to the stations they are intended to fill."

"Why do people say that cats have nine lives, Miss Fanny?" asked Dora.

"Because they are very tenacious of life," replied Miss Fanny. "A fall which would kill almost any other small animal instantly, will be sustained by a cat without apparent injury. You know it is a common saying, that cats always fall on their feet, which I suppose is the reason they are not often hurt. Nevertheless I have known a cat killed by a very moderate fall."

"Did not some of the ancients worship cats?" asked Tessy.

"The Egyptians considered them sacred," replied Miss Fanny, "though I do not know that they actually worshipped them. They treated them always with much consideration when living, and embalmed their dead bodies with great care. These cat-mummies are now found in great numbers in Egypt, along with those of the Ibis, a kind of bird, and of the bull. It is now believed that a kind of wild cat found in Upper Egypt, and called by naturalists Felis Mamlata, is the original stock of the domestic cat."

"They are curious creatures," said Barbara. "I do not wonder that people used always to associate them with witches."

"Did they?" asked Dora.

"Yes, they play a prominent part in all the witch-stories of the last two or three centuries, and a great many tales were told of witches appearing in the form of cats, to the persons they afflicted.

The poor unfortunate wretches who were tried for witchcraft, when forced by abuse and torture to confess deeds which they never committed, almost always clothed their familiar imp in the form of a cat, usually a black one; and it must be confessed that there is something mysterious and almost alarming in the appearance of a large and well-fed coal-black cat. Then their property of emitting electrical sparks in cold weather — a property which they possess in a greater degree than almost any other animal; their great sagacity, which is united to a degree of independence or willfulness which makes it very difficult to train them; and the horrible and surprising noises in which they are accustomed to indulge at their nightly meetings, all combine to render them a terror to ignorant people whose resource it is call every thing witchcraft which appears mysterious to their minds."

"I don't like cats!" said Agnes. "I think they are treacherous, deceitful creatures. You

never know what they are going to do. You may be playing with them as peaceably as possible, and the first thing you know up comes a paw, and you get a great scratch."

"I do not blame any cat for scratching you, Agnes," said Dora. "You are always teasing them."

"They are often teased unintentionally, by those who play with them," said Miss Fanny. "Cats are nervous creatures, and are frequently annoyed by having their fur stroked the wrong way, and their ears pulled. You may have observed with regard to yourself, that turning your hair in a new direction will often make your head very sore and uncomfortable."

"I have," murmured a little girl, whose long and thick hair was very elaborately curled and braided. "I have often wished I hadn't any."

"Then you may appreciate the feelings of a cat under the same circumstances, Adeline," replied Miss Fanny, smiling.

"I have often rubbed up our cat's fur, to see the sparks fly out, but I never thought of its hurting her," said Minny. "I remember now he never seemed to like it much, though he never scratched in his life. And, Miss Fanny, he can open any door in the house, even one with a round handle. He always come up and opens mother's door in the morning, and then goes down to breakfast with her."

"Aunt had a more knowing cat than that," remarked Tessy. "She used to catch fish in the creek, and bring them up to the house. She once caught a pike that weighed two pounds. She used to lie on a rock a little way out from the bank, to watch, and when she saw a fish coming she would knock it out of the water with her paw. At first we thought she must steal them somewhere, but after a while we watched her, and saw how she managed."

"She was a clever cat," said Miss Fanny. "It was the more remarkable, as cats have usually such

a great dislike to wetting their feet. We had a cat, when we lived in the country, that used to go out shooting. I do not mean that she actually used the gun with her own paws," she hastened to add, anticipating the exclamations of her auditors, "but she used to accompany my brother, and seemed to enjoy the sport amazingly. We had a great abundance of early cherries, and were in consequence very much annoyed by the legions of cherry-birds, which made their appearance with the first May Dukes, and never left a perfect cherry on the tree. Scarecrows, bells, and other devices were tried to no effect, and at last it became necessary to shoot them. The slaughter was very great for two or three days. Lupa soon comprehended the use of the gun, and as soon as my brother took up his fowling-piece, she was on the alert. She would follow close behind him, and stop when he did, crouching to the ground. The moment he fired, she would spring forward, and she almost invariably caught the

bird before it came to the earth. As the game was abundant, and my brother a capital marksman, Lupa soon became very fat, and grew indifferent to this kind of fare, after which she would amuse herself by dragging the dead birds together and piling them up in heaps. This same old cat would drink wine and even brandy, and was very fond of strong coffee, but she disliked milk, and would take cold water in preference."

"Tody likes tea," said Marian; "mother gives him some almost every night, after she has finished her own, but Tabby never would touch it. Oh! I am so glad we have found out what has become of Tabby! But perhaps you would like to keep her, Theresa?" she added, seeing or fancying a shade upon Tessy's countenance.

"Oh! no!" replied Tessy. "You know I am going to school after New-Year's, and I would rather you had her than not, since she belonged to you in the first place."

The children's conversation was here interrupt-

ed by a call to supper, which was bountiful and excellent of course. Among the other beauties of the table, was a basket of nicely frosted cakes, each ornamented with colored sugar-plums, disposed in the form of a letter, there being one for each little guest. Thus there was an M for Minny, an E for Emily, and a T for Theresa, and so on through the whole list. Now it so happened that by some mistake there was only one A among them, and the basket being passed first to Adeline, she took it as a matter of course, so that when Agnes Warrington's turn came, there was none for her. Miss Fanny was very sorry, and looked again and again, but no other A was to be found. Agnes looked very much displeased indeed, and her anger would have found vent in something besides words if no older persons had been present, but Mrs. Merriam and the young ladies were in the room, and she did not exactly like to give way to her temper before them.

"I will give Agnes mine," said little Virginia

Haskall, Ella's cousin. "If you turn the V upside down, it will do very well for an A, and cousin Fanny will make me one some other time."

Fanny looked at Agnes, expecting to see her at once decline the offer; but Agnes did nothing of the kind. She simply accepted it as a matter of course, and soon disposed of it, without even thanking the generous donor.

"Well, I would be ashamed to do that, any way!" said Adeline to her next neighbor. "She might have had mine and welcome, only I wanted to carry it to my little brother Albert, who has broken his leg, you know. I thought it would please him, but I would rather have given it to Agnes than have had dear little Virginia robbed of hers. I never heard any thing so mean — a little thing not six years old, and Agnes is thirteen."

Adeline spoke in a whisper, but Agnes overheard her, and her already ruffled temper was still farther provoked. She would not join in any of

the games after supper, objecting to every thing proposed, and conducting herself so rudely that Tessy and Barbara were extremely mortified, and the latter resolved she would never go out with her again.

"Well, girls, did you have a pleasant party?" asked Mrs. Warrington, who was sitting in the parlor when they arrived at home.

"No," replied Agnes, snatching at the first word. "It was the dullest, stupidest thing I ever saw, and the supper was miserable. There was not half enough to go round."

"O Agnes!" exclaimed Tessy and Dora together, and Dora continued: "You only say that because you did not have one of the lettered cakes, though you did, too, for Viginia gave you hers. I should have been ashamed to take it if I had been you."

"And only think, mother," continued Agnes, unheeding her sister's words, "that kitten is Ella Merriam's, and she is going to send for it. She

told Tessy she might keep it if she wanted to, but Miss Tessy said she would rather they had it again, as she was going to school, and she could not trust it with any of us."

This was no careless exaggeration on Agnes' part, but a deliberate lie. She knew perfectly well what her cousin had said, but she was very angry with her for disregarding her signals for silence when the kitten was first mentioned, and she was determined to have her revenge.

Mrs. Warrington turned to Theresa with a look of great displeasure, but Barbara interposed before she had time to speak.

"That is not true, mother! Ella asked Theresa if she would like to keep the kitten, though they were plainly very anxious to have her back again, and she answered, that as she was going to school after the holidays, she would rather the kitten were back at her own home. The word 'trust' was neither spoken nor implied, and Agnes has drawn upon her imagination for her facts.

All the other children seemed to enjoy the evening very much, and so I think would Agnes have done, if she had taken the pains to behave like a lady."

She then informed her mother of Agnes' conduct. Mrs. Warrington was for once seriously angry. She knew from experience, that Barbara's account was perfectly to be relied on, and she was very much annoyed that Agnes should have made such a display in the house of Mrs. Merriam, whom she respected more than almost any other friend she had. Almost for the first time in her life, she reproved Agnes severely, and declared she would not suffer her to go to another party during the holidays. Agnes went away crying, very angry at her sister, and determined to be revenged upon Theresa, whom she regarded most unjustly as the cause of her disgrace.

The next day was bright and clear, though cold, and as usual all the family went to church, except Agnes, who declared she had such a headache

that she could hardly keep her eyes open. Mrs. Warrington admitted the excuse the more readily as she was quite hoarse, and seemed to have symptoms of a severe cold. So she was left at home on the sofa in the drawing-room, with Tabby for company, and a pile of new books for amusement, her mother charging her upon no account to expose herself to the cold air.

No sooner had the bells stopped ringing than Agnes turned her feet off the sofa, where she had been lying, and opening the parlor-door, looked out into the hall and listened. She saw no one and heard nothing except a distant sound of beating eggs and pounding down in the kitchen. All the servants had gone to church, except the cook and her assistant, who were busily engaged in the preparations for the Christmas dinner. The time was a favorable one for accomplishing her purpose. In another moment, Tabby, who was lying peacefully before the fire, washing her face and paws, and thinking of home, felt herself

'She threw her into the snow.'

rudely snatched up, and wrapped in an apron. Without stopping to put on bonnet or overshoes, Agnes ran down stairs, out of the back door, and down a lane, which led past the back of the barn. She went on through the deep snow, without heeding the cold wind, till she came to a large piece of uninclosed ground at some distance from the house, when thinking she had gone far enough, she unrolled her apron, and taking poor frightened Tabby by the back of the neck, she hurled her from her as far as she could into the snow. Then without stopping to see what had become of the poor kitten, she ran home again as fast as she could go, and slipped into the house, congratulating herself upon having accomplished her purpose unseen.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

AGNES' REWARD.

AGNES had been so excited that she had not bestowed a thought on the severity of the weather, but when she was once more in the parlor, she found herself shivering violently. The snow had found its way into her boots, and clung to the hems of her skirt so that they were wet through, and instead of changing them at once, as she should have done, she contented herself with standing over the register of the furnace, till she felt tolerably warm again, when she was glad to resume her place upon the sofa, for the excitement had increased her headache, and she felt very unwell. Now that it was over she began to feel rather frightened at what she had done, for she

knew how much her mother regarded Mr. and Mrs. Merriam, and how angry she would be at any affront offered to them or their children, and she almost wished she had allowed matters to take their course. She was not altogether void of conscience, though she seldom permitted the voice of that inward monitor to be heard, or listened to her when she did speak; but now as she lay on the sofa, with her head aching too much to allow her to fix her thoughts upon her books, the still small voice made itself audible.

"Agnes Warrington," it said, "you have been guilty of a very treacherous, wicked, and cruel action; treacherous and unkind toward your cousin who never injured you, and whose kindness and forbearance have been unvaried towards you, since the first moment that she came a guest into your mother's house; and cruel to a harmless and defenseless little animal, as well as to the little girls who were joyfully looking forward to the recovery of their pet kitten. All this you have been guilty

of, and you are now contemplating the telling of several lies to conceal your fault!"

This and much more, did conscience whisper into the ear of Agnes Warrington on that Christmas morning, while she lay on the sofa—while thousands of God's people all over the land, were gathered in his courts to praise him for the gift of his dear Son, sent us on that day for the salvation of the world—born of a woman, and coming in the shape of a little child, that children might realize how the Son of God could feel for the peculiar trials of children.

When Mrs. Warrington came home from church, she found Agnes very unwell indeed, and suffering greatly both from headache and oppression of the lungs. Agnes herself tried to make light of it, and assured her mother that it was only a little cold, and that her headache was caused by something she had eaten the night before.

"Some of the cake was very rich," remarked Barbara, "and I rather think Agnes ate a good deal."

"Perhaps it was Virginia's cake that disagreed with her," said Dora in a half-whisper to Theresa; "I should think it would."

Tessy took no notice of the unkind remark, but Agnes heard it, and gave her sister a look which told of any thing but sisterly feelings.

"I think it is very wrong to give such rich cake to children," said Mrs. Warrington, "but I do not believe it is that which now troubles Agnes. She seems to have taken a severe cold, and I am really afraid it will make her sick. Had you not better go to bed, Aggy, and not try to sit up to dinner?"

"Oh! no, mother, I would rather not. I think I shall feel better by and by." Agnes exerted herself to sit up as she said this, and began to talk quite gayly with her cousin and sisters about the party, and the presents they had received, though her contracted brow, and now and then a deep sigh, showed how much it cost her.

"Oh! and by the way!" exclaimed Tessy, "we saw Ella and Marian going into church, and they

said they would call for the kitten this afternoon, when they came from their grandmother's, where they were going after church. Do you know where Tabby is, Agnes?"

"No," replied Agnes putting her hand to her head, "I have not seen her since you went away."

"You had better find her and feed her, Tessy," said Mrs. Warrington, as she gathered up her bonnet and furs, "I should not like to have Mrs. Merriam think that we starved her while she was here."

Tessy hunted the house and the barn all over, calling, Kitty! Kitty! and seeking in vain for her favorite.

"Is'nt it queer, Agnes?" she said, returning to the parlor where her cousin was now lying on the sofa, with her face turned away from the light. "I can not find Tabby any where. I have called her all over the house, and in the barn, and looked in the cellar and every place for her. I wonder where she can be. She was lying here, I thought, when we went away."

"She wanted to go out a little while ago," said Agnes, "and I got up and opened the door for her. She went out towards the barn, and I dare say she is curled up on the hay somewhere, or watching for a mouse."

If Tessy had suspected any thing wrong, her suspicions might have been strengthened by two circumstances, first, from her cousin's very confused and hesitating manner, and secondly, from the fact that her two statements contradicted each other, for Agnes had declared in the first place that she had not seen Tabby. Thinking no evil, however, she attributed her cousin's manner to her obviously increasing illness, and went out to take another look for the missing kitten.

Not so Barbara. Accustomed to her sister's manner, she perceived that something was wrong, and guessed at once that Agnes was concerned in the kitten's disappearance. She said nothing, however, till she had herself looked all over the

house and grounds, satisfying herself that Tabby was not upon the premises.

"How sorry I am!" said Tessy, as they were all assembled in the parlor, waiting for the bell to ring for dinner. "How disappointed Ella and Marian will be. I wish they had come for her this morning."

"It is very strange," remarked Mrs. Warrington. "The kitten seemed so happy and contented here, I should hardly think she would have gone away of her own accord."

"She has never gone away without hands, I am certain, mother," remarked Barbara emphatically.

"What nonsense!" said Agnes peevishly. "Who do you suppose would trouble themselves to put her out of the way?"

"Whoever it is, will be found out sooner or later," replied Barbara; "you may depend upon that." She was about to add more, but was interrupted by a ring at the door-bell.

"There is Ella now," said Dora, looking out

of the window. "I see Fanny and Sophia in the carriage."

"Miss Fanny and Miss Sophia," corrected her mother. "How often shall I tell you, Dora, not to speak in that familiar way of ladies older than yourself? Ask the little girls to come in, Tessy."

"Don't bring them up here, I beg of you," said Agnes. "My head aches so, their chattering will drive me crazy."

But she spoke too late, and in a moment Ella and Marian were ushered into the room. Like well-bred little girls as they were, they replied politely to Mrs. Warrington's greeting and repeated a message from their mamma to her, but their eyes were wandering about the room in search of their favorite. Mrs. Warrington remarked it, and said kindly:

"You are looking for Tabby, my dears, and I wish she were here to greet you, but I am sorry to say, she is not to be found. She was here at church-time, apparently perfectly contented and

happy, but she has disappeared in the most mysterious manner, and I am afraid she has run away."

The girls' eyes filled with tears. They had so confidently counted on seeing their dear little Tabby again, that they could hardly keep from crying at the disappointment. They asked about the circumstances, and Agnes again repeated her story, but with such slight variations as more and more to convince Barbara that her suspicions were well founded.

"Well, never mind," said Ella, after they had heard all that was to be said on the subject of Tabby's disappearance, and Mrs. Warrington had exhausted her praises of Tabby's beauty and docility. "I am sure we are all very much obliged to you, for taking such good care of her while she was here. If I only knew that she had a good home somewhere, I should not care so much, but I can not bear to think of her being lost in the snow, and perhaps—" but Ella's voice

failed her, and the eyes of both sisters filled with tears, as they pictured to themselves, their little petted favorite starved to death, or lying frozen stiff and stark, under some fence or deserted building. Agnes turned suddenly, as if stung with pain, and almost groaned aloud.

"Is your head so very bad, dear?" asked Marian, diverted at once from her own grief, by the thought of another's suffering. "How sorry I am! I hope you are not going to be sick."

She put her hand into her little muff as she spoke, and after exchanging a look with her sister, she pulled out a very large and beautiful orange—a rare sight at Christmas time.

"Please take this orange, Aggy," said she. "Perhaps it will do your throat good. Aunt Hastings gave it to us, but I am sure she would rather you had it. Such things taste so good when one is feverish."

She laid the orange down by Agnes, who uttered some indistinct words in reply, and then

repeating their thanks to Mrs. Warrington, they took their leave.

"Well, I will say, Agnes, notwithstanding what you say about them, I do think they are two of the sweetest girls in town," exclaimed Dora, as soon as the door was shut.

"Wasn't it kind in them, mother, to give Aggy their orange?"

"Very kind indeed!" replied Mrs. Warrington, with more than usual animation. "I perfectly agree with you, Dora, and only wish you and Aggy would imitate them; I am afraid neither of you would have been willing to do the same, if the case had been yours."

"I shouldn't, I know," said Dora, who was much more straightforward than her sister. "Not unless any one was very sick indeed, I mean."

Mrs. Warrington sighed, as she thought of the difference between her children and those of her friend, and wondered what could be the cause of it; for that it was in any degree owing to her,

she never imagined. Perhaps if she had considered longer, she might have come to some correct conclusion upon the subject, but it was always a great deal of trouble for Mrs. Warrington to think, and besides, she was interrupted by a call to dinner.

Agnes went down with the rest, though her head was giddy, and she had such a sharp pain in her chest, that she could hardly breathe without crying out; but she was determined not to confess herself sick if she could help it. Pain was too much for her, however; she could eat nothing, and before dinner was over, she burst into tears, and declared she could sit up no longer.

Nothing had power to rouse Mrs. Warrington so effectually as the illness of any of her children. She hastened to put Agnes to bed, and sent off an express for the doctor. While helping her sister to undress, Barbara chanced to feel the hem of her petticoat, which was still quite wet.

"Why, Aggy," she exclaimed: "How wet all your clothes are, and your stockings and boots are quite wet through. Where have you been, to get them into such a state?"

"I am sure I don't know," said Agnes, now really speaking with difficulty. "Perhaps I got snow on them when I opened the door for the kitten. I wish you would not talk, Barbara, it hurts my head so."

Barbara said no more, but her suspicions were now fully confirmed. It was some time before the doctor arrived, and when he did come, Agnes was so much worse that her mother was very much alarmed about her, nor did the doctor's opinion tend to soothe her. He pronounced the disorder to be a violent attack of inflammation of the lungs, requiring the most active treatment. Agnes was bled, which somewhat relieved the pain and oppression at her chest, but they returned with redoubled violence in the evening, and it seemed almost doubtful whether she would live

through the night. Her head was very much disturbed, and her mind wandered at times, but though she was very anxious to talk, they could not understand what she said. At last Tessy, who was sitting by her, distinguished the words: "Throw away the kitten."

"There is no kitten here, dear Aggy," she said soothingly, thinking that Agnes imagined the kitten to be on the bed. "That is only a fancy of yours: the kitten is not here."

But Agnes was not satisfied, and kept trying to make herself understood, repeating the word "kitten" again and again, with painful emphasis.

"She must not talk so," said Barbara. "The doctor said she must not speak a word. Never mind, Aggy," she added, answering to the thought she believed to be in her sister's mind. "Don't talk about it now, I dare say we can find the kitten in the morning, and then it shall be sent home directly."

"And tell Ella I am sorry," said Agnes, more calmly.

"Yes, we will tell her so. Now do try to go to sleep like a good girl."

For a little time, Agnes seemed more composed, but soon her delirium returned, and she kept begging Theresa and Barbara to go and find the kitten before it froze to death in the snow. She got no rest till nearly daylight, when she fell into a troubled slumber, and George coming in, sent the girls up stairs to take some rest.

"What made you speak so to Agnes?" asked Theresa, as they parted at the top of the stairs. "Do you think she knows any thing about Tabby's disappearance?"

"I am quite sure of it," said Barbara. "Her stories about it did not agree at all, and her manner was very confused, which led me to suspect something wrong, and when I came to undress her, I found her clothes all wet round the bottom, as though she had been out in the snow. Poor

child! I am afraid she will pay dearly for her malice. The doctor admitted to me that he thought her in great danger."

Barbara kissed Theresa, and turned into her own room, while Theresa went on to the apartment which she occupied together with her cousins. Her entrance aroused Dora.

"Why, Tessy, are you up already?" said she, sitting up and rubbing her eyes. "It must be ever so early."

"Half-past five," said Tessy, setting down her candle. "I am up because I have not been in bed; I have been sitting up with Aggy."

"Sitting up!" said Dora, rousing herself: "she is not very sick, is she? I thought it was only a cold."

"She is very sick indeed, and the doctor says she has inflammation of the lungs," replied Theresa. "I am afraid—" she could not finish the sentence.

Dora sprang up, and began to dress herself.

"What are you going to do?" asked Tessy.

"I am going to Agnes," was the reply. "You ought to have called me before."

"If you go down, Dora, you must be very still," said Theresa, stopping her cousin, whose trembling hands showed her excitement, as she vainly endeavored to fasten her frock. "You must be composed, and not speak one word to Agnes, nor let her talk to you. It is as much as her life is worth."

Dora promised, and went hastily down stairs. Agnes was still in a troubled sleep, and George allowed her to come in and look at her sister, whose countenance was already very much changed. Dora thought she should hardly have known her.

"Can I do any thing for her, George?" she asked in a choked whisper.

"I don't know that you can," replied George. "Nurse is here, and I shall stay till the doctor comes. But you can run and get what is wanted," he added kindly, seeing how distressed Dora

looked. "I am afraid it won't do for you to stay in the room much, for Aggy begins to talk as soon as any one comes near her."

The event proved that George was right, for the moment Agnes waked and saw Dora, she began to talk again; sometimes about the kitten, sometimes going over the events of the party, and accusing her of unkindness about the cake. It was too much for Dora's fortitude; she left the room hastily, and burst into tears when she got into the passage. George followed her out, and shut the door.

"You must be very quiet, my dear Dora, if you want to be of use to Aggy or any one," he said kindly but firmly. "You can be of much service if you can control yourself, for there is a great deal to be done. Mother is down with nervous headache, and Tessy and Barbara were up all night."

"Do you think Aggy will die, George?" asked Dora, making a great effort to restrain her sobs.

"I don't know," replied George, turning away his face. "She is very ill, and nobody can tell how it may turn out, but we will hope and pray for the best. Will you go up to mother's door very quietly, and see if she is awake and wants any thing?"

Dora glided up stairs, and listened at her mother's door, but all was still; so she went down again, and took her seat on the stairs to be ready if she should be wanted in the sick-room. It was yet early morning—the gas-lights were burning in the hall, and the servants were just beginning to set about their duties. It seemed an age, afterwards, to Dora, that she sat meditating upon the top of the stairs. Her head was bent down, and rested on her hands, and she sat so still that one might have thought her asleep, but it was not so. She was going over and over her past life and conversations with the sister who was now to all appearance fast passing away—where?

Dora did not like to think of that. How mean

and little did all their quarrels appear to her now —how every malicious, ill-tempered word and action appeared in their true colors! The very last words to her sister had been words of unkindness, and they had parted in anger. Now, Agnes did not even know her, and perhaps would never speak to her again — would go away into that other unknown world, where Dora felt they might never meet, and she would never have the opportunity of making it up—never, never see her any more. She did not cry now. She was too miserable for tears. She did not know where to look for comfort and support, and help to do better, for Dora was not a religious child. It is true she had been taught to say her prayers as soon as she could speak, and she had always been to church and to Sunday-school, but she had never thought of religion as any thing that concerned herelf personally. There would be time enough for that when she was grown up.

So had Barbara always thought, and now that

she was grown up, she found less time than ever. George and Tessy were the only persons in the family who really made Christian principles the rule of their lives, and that sympathy was a bond of union between them, stronger even than Tessy's helplessness, and George's thoughtful kindness of disposition.

All that dreary day, Dora wandered about the house restless and miserable, finding her only comfort in running up and down stairs, and waiting upon her mother, who was almost prostrated by one of the severe attacks of nervous headache, to which she was subject.

Renewed search was made for the kitten, as Agnes still continued very anxious about it, but no trace of her was to be found.

Agnes continued to grow worse, and at nightfall the doctor had almost given up the hope of saving her life. Just before dark, Ella Merriam came in to inquire for her. Dora burst into tears as Ella came in, and in answer to her questions,

could only shake her head and sob. Ella cried in sympathy.

"She will never get well, Ella—the doctor says so. Oh! what shall I do when she is dead?"

"I don't know what I should do if Marian were to die," said Ella.

"You would not feel as bad as I do," replied Dora, "because you and Ella never quarrel. I don't believe you ever struck one another in your lives."

"No, indeed!" said Ella, shocked at the very idea. "We have not quarrelled in ever so long—not since we were little children. Nobody could quarrel with Marian, she is so sweet tempered. But is Aggy very bad?"

"The doctor says he has very little hope of saving her," replied Dora sadly, "but it seems to me as though she must be better, because she is not crazy as she was this morning. She seems to know every thing now."

The little girls were talking in the hall, when

the door of Agnes' room was opened for a moment, and she caught the sound of their voices.

"Is not that Ella Merriam's voice?" she asked of Barbara, who was with her. "Do let her come in a moment; I want to see her so much. Oh! do, please!"

She pleaded so earnestly that Barbara was afraid to oppose her, and called Ella in, giving her a caution to be very quiet. The two girls came in together, and stood by the bedside. Ella was terrified by the change in her play-mate's appearance. She had never seen any one so sick before, and as Agnes struggled for breath, she almost expected to see her expire before her eyes. She stooped and kissed her, but did not speak. Agnes held her hands fast.

"I want to tell you about the kitten," she began, but Barbara interposed.

"You must not talk, Agnes. I will tell Ella."

"But you don't know, Barbara."

"I know you did something to the kitten to put her away."

"Threw her away in the snow in the vacant lot," Agnes explained. "It was very wicked—I am so sorry. Won't you—"

Her voice failed, but she still held Ella's hand tightly, and looked earnestly in her face.

Ella did not think at first what she meant to say, till Theresa whispered to her: "She wants you to forgive her, Ella."

"Yes, yes—" was all Agnes could say, fixing her eyes upon those of her companion, as though she would read her very soul. At such a time no one could be angry, and it was hard for Ella at any time. She stooped and kissed Agnes, saying earnestly: "I do forgive you, Aggy; and so I am sure will Marian, and I hope God will forgive you, too. Yes, if you are sorry, He will. Mother says so, and it is in the Bible, I know. Don't you remember what the minister reads in church: 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to

forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' "

Barbara was afraid to have the little girls remain longer, and took them out of the room, while Theresa staid with Agnes. They were afraid the excitement might have injured her, but on the contrary, she seemed more quiet and composed than she had done before since the commencement of her illness. She had almost a comfortable night, and when the doctor called in the morning, he announced that there was a slight, but decided, improvement in all her symptoms.

When Ella turned to go home, she could not help going round by the vacant lot, to see if she could find any traces of poor Tabby; but it had snowed all the morning, and the common was all one sheet of unbroken white. Ella thought of the poor kitty lying stiff and cold under the drifted snow, and her tears started afresh, as she turned slowly away, convinced that search was hopeless. She did not feel quite so much like

forgiving Agnes then as she had done when standing by her bedside, and holding her feverish hand, but she knew that the feeling was wrong, and struggled against it.

"After all, if poor dear Tabby is dead, that is the last of her," she said to herself. "She will never suffer any more, and she has had a very happy life of it so far — but for Agnes and Dora! Oh! how glad I am that Marian and I have never quarrelled, though I am sure it is no thanks to me that we have not."

Then she remembered an instance that very morning, when they were putting their room in order, in which she had insisted on having her own way, and Marian had quietly given up to her, and how only the day before she had been angry at sister Sophia, for showing her that she had not wiped the tea-cups dry. She felt very much ashamed as she recalled these and similar instances of unkind temper and feelings, and it no longer seemed so hard for her to forgive Aggy.

When Ella and Marian said their prayers that night, they did not omit to remember Agnes and Dora, nor did they forget to ask that they might always live as little children should, in peace and unity.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

THE HARD ROAD.

We must now return to Tabby, of whom we have almost lost sight. She was at first so stunned and amazed by her sudden change of circumstances, as hardly to understand what had happened to her, but by degrees she collected her senses, and shaking the snow from her eyes, she raised herself on her hind legs and looked about her. She was almost in the midst of a vacant lot or common, which was covered with snow, now about a foot deep, but not frozen sufficiently hard to allow of travelling on the crust.

At one side of this piece of ground lay a street or alley, and on the other some barns and several small houses. It was towards these, after some

consideration, that Tabby directed her course. She thought it probable that she might find some sort of a home in one of the houses, and if not, she believed she should be able to make her living in a barn, as she had lately acquired some experience in mousing.

The snow was deep and powdery, and the bleak wind sweeping over it whirled it into the face and eyes of the poor kitten. Her little paws ached with the cold, and her ears felt as though they were being burned off; but still she toiled painfully along, directing her course towards the best looking of the houses. She had just got into something like a path, made by some one who had crossed a little before, and was congratulating herself on finding easier travelling, when she heard a voice exclaim:

"Look, Fred! what is that over in the snow?" and looking up she saw two lads watching her from the window of a barn not very far off.

"It is a cat," replied the other. "See how neatly

I'll fetch her over," and taking aim at poor Tabby, he threw with all his force a hard apple which he held in his hand. His aim was only too true. The missile struck her on the side, and laid her breathless on the ground.

"There now, you have killed the poor thing, I hope you feel better," said the other boy. "I do wonder what pleasure any fellow finds in tormenting every thing that comes within his reach."

"Oh! nonsense!" returned the other, looking rather ashamed. "It is not so easy to kill a cat, I can tell you. I dare say she is only pretending, and if she is dead, there are enough more cats in the world. Come, I am going into the house. It is cold enough to freeze a dog out here."

"And I am going home," said the boy who had spoken for Tabby; "I have got my *chores* to do yet."

"I haven't any chores to do, thank you," said Fred.

"May be it would be better for you if you had," returned his companion. "But I must get mine done; so, good night."

Tabby was not killed, but it was some minutes before she recovered her senses, and still longer before she was able to walk or even stand. The hard apple had hurt her cruelly, and it was with difficulty that she pursued her way, drawing her breath with increased difficulty at every step she made. More than once she felt as though she must give up the attempt, and lie down and die where she was, but as we have said before, she had a remarkable amount of perseverance, and besides, she had not quite given up the hope of finding her way home again, though her chances of doing so were growing smaller and smaller every day. She was often obliged to stop and rest, and the short day was drawing to a close by the time that she found herself close behind one of the houses that she had been approaching. She made several attempts before she was able to jump over the low

wall at the back of the yard, but succeeding at last, she went slowly up the walk, and ascended the steps. There was a smell of cooking perceptible, and a clatter of plates and knives told Tabby that some one was engaged in setting a table.

"The servants are getting their dinner 'at home,'" she thought, "and dear mother and Tody are having theirs. O dear! if I had only staid with them. I would not mind any thing if I could only see them, and tell them how much I love them, but, O dear! I am afraid I never shall."

With these thoughts passing through her mind, it is no wonder that her modest mew for admittance took a very piteous tone. A little girl opened the door.

"It is a little cat," said she, speaking to some one within. "Shall I let her in?"

"Oh! no, child," replied a woman's voice. We don't want any cats around the house. Shut the door, it is as cold as Greenland."

"It looks very cold and hungry," said the little girl compassionately, "and it is a real pretty kitten. Just come and look at it, mother!"

The woman came to the door accordingly, and as soon as Tabby saw her, she stood on her hind legs and put her paws over her nose, as Ella had taught her to do when she wanted any thing.

"Only see how she begs," said the little girl. "Do let her come in, mother, just for a little while."

Seeing the effect produced, Tabby lay down and rolled over, and then sneezed, which exhausted the list of her accomplishments. "O dear!" she said to herself, as she performed these feats: "How I do wish I had learned more of the other things Miss Ella used to try so hard to teach me. But it is too late now."

At this moment the cry of a baby was heard from the inner room, and the woman turned away without making any reply to the little girl, who profiting by the implied permission, allowed Tab-

'Only see how she begs.'

by to slip in, and then shutting the door, went on in haste with her occupation of setting the table. Tabby found herself in a kitchen, small but neat and comfortable. There was a cooking stove with a good coal fire, enough of plain furniture, and a general air of respectability. The next room was handsomely furnished for a parlor, and through the open door of a pantry, Tabby could perceive a handsome set of china with nice glass dishes and other matters, such as she had been accustomed to see in daily use at home; but the dishes which her little friend was putting on the table were very different, being coarse, mismatched, and scanty, with bits broken out here and there, and an abundance of cracks.

The little girl, whose name she discovered was Polly, was clothed in a forlorn old merino dress which had once been handsome, with a good many patches and darns, and need of more, and her hair was tucked up behind with a broken horn comb. Her face was not very pretty, nor even very amia-

ble in its expression, and yet there was something about it that Tabby liked.

She made all these observations as she was warming herself under the stove. Presently the woman made her appearance from the other room with a baby of ten months old, which she set down upon the floor, and then proceeded in her preparations for supper. She placed upon the table a moderate supply of bread and butter, the latter of very doubtful quality; some brown sugar in a bowl, and a small pitcher full of blueish milk. Then she put a very little black tea into a small tin teapot, which looked as if it might have seen service since the time of the last war, and having filled it up to the top with water, she set it on the stove. Hungry as she was, Tabby did not think the meal very inviting in its appearance, and Polly seemed to be of the same opinion.

"Father will want some cold meat," she said as her mother turned round. "He had nothing but bread and milk for his dinner."

"He can not have what is not in the house," was the short reply.

"There is the dried beef, at any rate," persisted Polly, "and the smoked halibut that father brought home Monday night. We haven't had a bit of that."

"I want that for tea, to-morrow night," replied Mrs. Webster. "I am going to have company to tea, and I want something decent."

"And then I suppose we shall have down the china cups and all the rest, and make a grand display," muttered Polly to herself, as her mother went into the other room for something. "For my part, I should like to have something comfortable for ourselves once in a while. I don't see the use of keeping every thing for company. Here comes father, mother," she added in a louder tone as the door opened. "Shall I put the tea on the table?"

Mr. Webster, a tall, thin, rather amiable looking man, apparently several years younger than

his wife, made his appearance as Polly spoke, with his dinner-pail in one hand, and several bundles in the other.

"Here, Polly, there's something for you," said he good-naturedly, as he chucked a good-sized bundle at her, which she caught with dexterity. "So don't say I didn't give you a Christmas present at last."

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Webster coming out of the bedroom, and looking on as Polly proceeded to unfold the parcel, and display to view a very pretty piece of dark calico. "Now, Mr. Webster, what in the world did you go and get that child a calico dress for? She doesn't want it the least in the world, and she does want a nice dress to wear to church and dancing-school. I meant to get her a silk dress this time, and her old frocks do well enough to wear about home. And what is the use of all those new school-books?" as another paper displayed several neat-looking volumes, at sight of which Polly's eyes sparkled. "She has

more books now than she ever studies. I do wish you would let me spend the money. I can make it go twice as far as you do."

"Why, yes," replied Mr. Webster, unwinding his comforter and taking off his great-coat, "you make it go rather too far, is the trouble—quite out of sight, in fact. Now I like to see the girl look pretty about home, even if she is not quite so smart abroad, hey, Polly?"

"Yes, indeed," said Polly heartily. "Sarah Ann Bond never had a silk frock in her life, but she has real nice calico ones for every day, and always looks fit to be seen, and so does Mrs. Bond. She don't have to run and change her dress if she sees any one coming. And I am sure I needed the new school-books. I have used Sarah Ann's till I am ashamed, and Miss Parker says we must all have books of our own after this."

"Well, well, that will do," said Mrs. Webster not in the best humor. "I wish you would not be always quoting the Bonds, as if they were the

eighth wonder of the world. I think you might find some other models than a policeman's wife and daughter."

"I don't care whose daughter she is," returned Polly. "She is the nicest girl I know, and the best scholar in our school. What else have you got, father?"

"There is some beefsteak—I should like a bit of that cooked for my supper, and there are the coffee and the sugar, and the baby's dress. I believe that is all, wife. They will send the flour and the buckwheat in the morning."

"You did not get the goblets then?" said his wife, a deep shade of disappointment coming over her face.

"Why, no, I could not buy them and Polly's things too, and still have the money to meet my payments! I think our glasses are good enough—too good for use, it appears," he added, looking at the cracked ones on the table.

"Mrs. Cox had beautiful goblets, the last time

I was there to tea," replied Mrs. Webster. "I should not have asked her here to-morrow, if I had not supposed I would have things as good as she did at home."

"Come, come, don't fret, wife: your friends, since you call them so, will take us as they find us, or leave us alone. When I get as good a salary as Cox, it will be time enough for you to spend as much as his wife. In the mean time, I want you to cook my steak, or let Polly do it. Oh! come, take a good big piece," as his wife cut off what was a scanty allowance for one. "Enough for all round. I dare say Polly will be glad of a bit."

"Beefsteak is a very genteel dish for tea, isn't it?"

"Who cares for gentility? Not you, I think, considering the table furniture you use every day. Give the cat a bit too—here, puss, where did you come from?"

"Now, Mr. Webster, I won't have that," inter-

posed Mrs. Webster. "I'll feed her after supper, if there is any left. Take up the baby if you can't find any thing else to do, and Polly, get the gridiron."

Mr. Webster was a printer, and earned good wages in the office of a daily paper. He had, when very young, married a young woman several years older than himself, with one child—the little girl, to whom we have just been introduced. He was an industrious, easy, good-tempered man, very steady, and fond of his wife and children, especially of Polly, who on her part, worshipped her step-father, and fully believed him to be the very best man in the world.

Mrs. Webster was an active, stirring woman, strong, neat and economical, and they might have been one of the happiest families in the world, but for one circumstance. That circumstance was, Mrs. Webster's intense desire to be fashionable—to make as much display on her husband's moderate salary, as her friend and model Mrs. Cox did

upon twice the sum. To this end, she pinched herself and her family in every thing that did not make an outside show.

Mr. Webster loved his comfort, and would have enough to eat, such as it was, but Mrs. Webster "took it out," upon herself and Polly, who was kept at the lowest point, both of provisions and clothes, when at home, that she might go to church, Sunday-school, and dancing-school in a silk frock, fine shoes, and worked skirts and drawers, and as her mother expressed it, "look as if she was some body." Now Polly cared nothing at all for worked skirts or silk frocks, and very little for dancing-school; but she did love books, both story books and school books, and she liked to be neat every day. She could not help feeling very much ashamed, when her dear friend Sarah Ann Bond came in to see her of a morning before school, to be caught in a dirty old merino frock, worn and faded, and patched to the last degree, and shoes down at heels.

Sarah Ann had no silk dress. Her very best frock was a plaid merino, which cost fifty cents a yard: but she always wore nice calico frocks, and white aprons every day, and subscribed for the Children's Magazine, and the Penny Gazette, and she had a convenient satchel in which to carry her books to and from school. She had a nice collection of story books, which Polly would have given all her nice frocks to possess, and she had a canary bird and a cat, and a play-house which her father had made for her out of an old cupboard. When Polly asked for any of these things, her mother always said, either that it was too much trouble, or that she could not afford it. But she could afford to buy an expensive set of china, and a dozen of cut-glass tumblers, and a set of fine knives and forks, all of which were quite too good for family use, and never made their appearance, except when she had company. And now she was out of conceit with her tumblers, because Mrs. Cox had goblets, and dissatis-

fied with her ivory-handled forks, because Mrs. Cox had silver ones; and she had been straining every nerve to accomplish the purchase of those very essential articles, when Mr. Webster disappointed all her calculations by subscribing for a daily paper, and buying two new frocks, and a set of new and expensive school-books for Polly.

The first of these items, she did not mind so much—it sounded genteel to take a daily paper, and Mrs. Cox had two, but the latter seemed perfectly useless to her mind, and she thought herself entitled to indulge in at least a week of sulkiness in consequence. Accordingly she never spoke one word during supper, except to reprove Polly, first for taking so much butter, and then for sharing her bit of steak with poor Tabby, who gratefully accepted her piece, small and gristly though it was, and purred over it as she had never done over her nice breakfasts and dinners at home.

"What a disagreeable woman," she thought to herself. "I don't see how such a nice man came

to marry her." And then she remembered how often she had been sullen at home, when things did not go to please her, and how, the very day she came away, she had refused to play with dear little Miss Ella, who had always been so kind to her. And now she was far away from them all, and they would never know how much she loved them, though she had been so naughty. All her cheerfulness vanished, as these thoughts passed through her mind; moreover, she was very tired and sleepy, and her side still gave her a good deal of pain; so she went and sat down under the stove, and was soon asleep.

But she was not destined to sleep long. The baby, who had been set down on the floor to amuse himself as he best could during supper-time, spied her place of refuge, and crawling to a convenient distance, he stretched out his little hand, and grasping Tabby by the tail, attempted to pull her towards him. Suddenly aroused by this rough treatment, and by the pain it gave to

her sore side, Tabby forgot both prudence and good temper, and thought only of defending herself; and extending her too-ready claws, she gave the little fellow a severe scratch on the hand. Baby screamed of course, and his mother hastened to take him up, and examine the extent of the mischief.

"There, Miss Polly, see what your fine new pet has done—scratched poor baby's hand almost off: that is always the way with cats—nasty, treacherous creatures, you never can tell when they are going to scratch. Scat, you hateful, cross thing;" and opening the door she took the broom, and drove poor Tabby out into the snow, which was now falling fast, giving her a slap with the broom as a parting present.

Polly remonstrated, but her objections were met by a box on the ear, and a command to go to bed if she could not behave herself. Polly knew by experience, there was no use in opposing her mother while in such a mood as this. So she washed

up the dishes in silence, and then, taking a new book which Sarah Ann had lent her, she sat down to read, but was informed that there was enough to be done without wasting time over nonsensical story-books, and commanded to take her sewing, till eight o'clock, when she was sent to bed in the dark.

Poor Tabby, meanwhile, after spending some time in vainly mewing at the door for admittance, began to look about her for some place of shelter for the night, from the blinding snow, and the keen north wind, which seemed to pierce her through and through. At last, after much searching, she found a hole in the wall under a barn, and was just crawling into it, when she was made aware that the place had another occupant, by hearing a growl, and the words, "Who's there?" from the farthest corner.

"It is only a kitten," answered Tabby, trembling both from cold and fear. "Please, do let me come in! I am so very cold."

"Come in, and welcome," said the cat who had spoken, rising and stretching himself. "There is room enough for two, and we can help keep each other warm."

Tabby gladly availed herself of the permission, and snugged down by the side of her new acquaintance, who proved to be a very large and powerful Maltese cat, fat, and in good condition, but bearing the marks of more than one battle, in his scarred nose and ragged ears.

"Why, what a little thing you are!" said the big cat compassionately. "You are only a kitten, in good earnest, and you don't look like a wild one either. I should think your folks might have let you sleep in the house such a bitter night as this."

"I only came to this house to-night," said Tabby. "At my own house, they would never have turned me out, but that is a very different place from this. I am afraid there are not many such people in the world."

"How did you come to leave your house if it was such a good one?" naturally inquired the gray cat.

"Because I was a discontented little fool, and did not know when I was well off," replied Tabby, and in answer to some further questions, she proceeded to relate her whole history to her new friend, greatly cheered by his sympathy, and by his beginning to lick her all over as her own mother used to do.

"And what are you going to do now?" asked the gray cat, as she concluded.

"I am sure I don't know," replied Tabby, mournfully. "I have all the while been hoping to get home again, but I am afraid there is not much chance of it now. I suppose I must look out for some place where I can have a home, and be well treated. I have learned to catch mice since I came from home, and I would do my best to be useful."

"I suppose it would be the best way for you,"

said the gray cat thoughtfully. "You are hardly old enough or strong enough to get your living in a barn; I prefer that way of life to any other, now that I am used to it; though I confess, on such a night as this, I can not help longing for my old cushion by the fire."

"So you have not always lived in a barn!" remarked Tabby, in an inquiring tone.

"Oh! no, I was brought up in the house, and very much petted, till I was two years old and more. I used to have a cushion by the parlor fire, and another in the kitchen, and staid where I pleased, and I always had a plate set down on the floor-cloth for me after dinner, besides what the cook gave me. Every body was kind to me, and nobody could be happier than I was for those two years. Then the house was sold, and the family moved away, and there was the end of my comfort for a while."

"But I should have thought they would have

taken you with them!" said Tabby. "Why didn't they?"

'Just on account of the silliest nonsense in the world," replied the gray cat. "My mistress was what is called a superstitious woman—that is, she believed in all sorts of stuff about signs, and things being lucky and unlucky—and some one as foolish as herself, persuaded her that it was unlucky to move a cat; so she went away, and left me to take care of myself or to starve, whichever I liked best. I staid about a good while, but the people that bought the place did not like cats, and drove me out whenever I attempted to make my way into the house. So at last, in despair, I took to the barns, and now that I am used to it, and have learned to provide for myself, I like it very well."

"I do not think I should ever like to live in a barn," said Tabby.

"No, I dare say not. It *is* pretty hard, especially as one has to fight one's way among the other

cats, and some of them are very ugly. I think the best way for you, will be to find a place in some nice family, where they want a cat to pet. How do you like the looks of things here?"

"Not at all!" returned Tabby, and she described the views she had witnessed since her arrival.

"That is just the idea I had of her," said the Maltese cat, whose name, he told Tabby, was Bold. "She has such a sharp voice. Mr. Webster seems a nice man enough. I wonder why he don't make his wife behave herself."

"Perhaps he can't!" suggested Tabby.

"Very likely," returned the gray cat, yawning. "It is not so easy always to make people behave themselves, especially when they have not much sense to begin with. But come, Tabby, since that is your name, curl down here by me, and let us see if we can keep each other warm for the night."

Tabby was only too glad to obey, and soon forgot all her troubles and perplexities in sleep.

CHAPTER SIXTH.

THE RIVER.

THE next morning Tabby was awakened early by the cold, and at first could hardly remember where she was, but the stinging of her ears and paws soon brought her to her senses. Her companion had left her side, and on going to the entrance of the hole where she had passed the night, she saw by the footprints in the new-fallen snow, that he had gone to a large barn at some distance, where he was probably engaged in catching his breakfast. At first she thought she would follow him, but she reflected that she might easily miss him, and fall in with some some of those evil-disposed cats of which he had spoken the night before. At another time, perhaps, this idea would

not have deterred her, but she felt weak and dispirited from the fatigues of the day before, and thought she would make one more effort to ingratiate herself with the mistress of the house, at least so far as to get some breakfast, after which she thought she might feel more like resuming her travels.

She reached the house-door accordingly, and congratulating herself on finding it ajar, she slipped in quietly, and took her seat on the floor under the stove, taking care to retreat into the farthest corner, out of reach of the baby. Having established herself safely, as she hoped, she looked eagerly round for some signs of breakfast, but none were to be seen except the dirty dishes, which Polly, with the signs of recent tears on her face, was washing up at the sink. Mrs. Webster herself was in the pantry, engaged in some cooking operations, to judge from the sound of stirring, and beating of eggs, which issued from the open door.

"Come, Polly, have you almost finished those

dishes?" said she, coming into the kitchen with a dish in her hand. "You have been long enough about them, to wash every dish in the house. I want you to go up to Martin's, and get some cinnamon and some essence of lemon."

"Father said he didn't want me to go to Martin's," said Polly.

"Never mind that," returned her mother. "You are my girl and not his, and you have got to do as I say: so, hurry!"

This was one of Mrs. Webster's favorite modes of "aggravation," as Polly called it. Whenever she was particularly bent upon venting her ill-humor upon the child, she reminded her that she was not the father's own daughter. The fact was, though perhaps she hardly confessed it to herself, that she was exceedingly jealous of Polly's affection for her step-father, and thought it exceedingly unnatural in the child to like him better than herself. This was one of her "peculiar trials," as she was wont to say in her confidential conver-

sations with her dear friend, Mrs. Cox. According to her own account, Mrs. Webster had a great many peculiar trials, and no one could say that she was not extremely liberal in sharing them with her friends.

"Come, hurry," repeated Mrs. Webster impatiently. "You get lazier and lazier every day. I have a great mind to keep you at home from school the rest of the winter, and try to teach you to work. You will never be good for any thing at the rate you go on."

Polly wiped the suds from her hands, and put on her bonnet without replying to this threat, which she knew to be a vain one, as her father would never consent to her being kept out of school.

"You are not going in that old frock!" exclaimed her mother. "What if Mrs. Cox should see you? Put on your green dress."

"I thought you were in such a hurry," began Polly; but her mother cut short her answer by a

smart slap on the shoulder, and an injunction not to be impudent. The fact was, Mrs. Webster was in a thoroughly bad humor. She expected her friend and model, Mrs. Cox, to tea in the evening, and had been bent upon surprising her with the elegance of her entertainment, which she had intended should be fully equal to any thing Mrs. Cox ever had at home. And now not only had her husband expended the money she had destined for plated forks and goblets, in clothes and school-books, but that very morning he had absolutely refused to let her have five dollars to purchase materials for plum-cake and macaroons, declaring that the times were too hard for poor people to indulge in such luxuries, and that he must put by every cent he could spare from absolute necessaries, to make the payments on his house and lot. In vain she had talked and reasoned, and even cried. Mr. Webster would not be convinced, but departed with his hundred dollars intact, folded in a paper

with his savings-bank book, ready to be deposited at noon.

But more annoyance was in store for her. Polly presently returned with her hands empty. "Martin says that father told him not to let any one get things there unless they brought the money."

"Your father is enough to provoke a saint," said Mrs. Webster. "I declare, if I could contrive any decent excuse, I would send to Mrs. Cox not to come. We shall not have any thing fit to be seen—nothing but plain pound-cake and sponge-cake, without a bit of seasoning, and no preserves but raspberry jam. I would not have done it for any thing, if I had not supposed we could have things decent. Mrs. Cox is so observing, too, she is sure to see every thing. As for Mrs. Randall, she never seems to know what she eats."

Tears of vexation actually stood in Mrs. Webster's eyes. Polly tried to console her.

"Why, mother, I was up at Miss Augusta's one night, and went into the dining-room just before

tea. They had only then bread and butter, and sponge-cake, and a little dried beef on the table—no plum-cake or preserves at all; and they had company to tea, too, I know, for I saw the ladies in the parlor; and you know Mrs. Cox herself says they are the most elegant people in town."

"To be sure," said Mrs. Webster, a little comforted, "they ought to know what's what as well as any body, and they are as rich as Jews too. But I suppose they had very handsome table furniture."

"It was just what they use every day," persisted Polly, "for I have been there before at meal-times."

"Well, they are queer folks, those Fords," said Mrs. Webster. "I don't pretend to understand them. Every body looks up to them, and thinks them the grandest people in town, and yet they never seem to care a bit about style or fashion, or any such thing. They are very different from the Lambs; *they* do make a dash worth while."

"Yes, and who thinks any more of them for it?" interrupted Polly. "Mr. Lamb is not half so much of a gentleman as father or Mr. Bond, and Mrs. Lamb does not look like a lady, for all her fine clothes; and as for manners, the Miss Lambs laugh and talk so loud in the street that people turn round to look at them. I would rather be Miss Augusta Ford than Miss Lamb, any day."

"Oh! you think Miss Augusta is perfect because she is your Sunday-school teacher. I must allow, though, that she has much manners, but I can not understand how she can run about on foot to see all sorts of people as she does. I should not think her mother would let her."

"Her mother does just so," replied Polly. "So I would not mind about the cake, mother. I dare say every thing will be nice enough, and Mrs. Cox knows that father does not get as high wages as her husband."

"Don't say *wages*, say salary; it sounds so much better. And another thing, Polly, while I think

of it: I was quite ashamed on Catechism afternoon, when Mr. Larned asked you your name, to hear you answer 'Polly Anne' so loud, that every one in the church could hear you. Why didn't you say Marianne, as I told you to?"

"Because you told me yourself that I was christened Polly Anne after Grandma, and I didn't want to tell a lie in the church."

"Don't be impudent!" said her mother sharply. "Come, be smart now, and clean up the stove before you sweep out, and then I want you to put down the floor-cloth."

"Hadn't I better leave the stove till after dinner?" asked Polly.

"I am not going to get any dinner," was the reply. "Your father has taken his, and it is not worth while to cook any thing just for us two. Turn that cat out! I am not going to have her round the stove."

"It is so cold," said Polly pityingly. "Can't I put her down cellar? There is a rat down there,

I heard him the other day, and he has gnawed some potatoes."

"Well, I don't care if you do, but I won't have her under foot. Come, be smart now: we shan't be through to-day."

Tabby was accordingly turned out of her warm corner, where she had been trying to forget that she was hungry, and soon found herself in a damp, cold cellar, in company with a bin of potatoes, a coal-bin, and a box of charcoal. The last object renewed her home-sick longing, which seemed to grow stronger and stronger as the chance of reaching home grew more remote.

"O mother, mother!" she said to herself, "shall I ever see you and dear Tody again, and do you ever think of poor, naughty Tabby?"

Overcome by these sad reflections, she sat down upon the lower stair, and cried a long time, and then, somewhat relieved by having given free course to her sorrows, she set herself seriously about finding something to eat. But hour after

hour of patient watching was all in vain. Neither rat nor mouse made its appearance, nor, though she searched in every corner, could she find so much as a dry crust of bread to satisfy the cravings of her appetite. What would she not now have given, even for some of the cold potatoes she used to disdain? She returned again and again to the only rat-hole she could find, but it was of no use; and faint with hunger and misery, she could not even forget her troubles in sleep. The cellar-door was opened once or twice, but it was always shut again so quickly that she had no chance to escape, and the windows were all tightly fastened. She had finally fallen into a doze, and was just dreaming that she was at home with her mother and Tody, eating cold chicken off a plate under the dining-room table, when she was awakened once more by the opening of the door.

"Dear me!" she said peevishly, "it seems I am not even to sleep in peace." But as she spoke, she looked up, and saw by the light of a candle,

which shot through the chink, that the door had been left ajar. She hastened up the stairs, and gently pawing against it, she succeeded in noiselessly pushing it open, and found herself again in the same kitchen, which had undergone such a change that she hardly knew it again. The stove had been blacked and polished, till it shone like the ebony shelves in Miss Sophia's cabinet; full white muslin curtains were up at the windows, and a handsome green-and-red floor-cloth covered the dingy rag carpet. The table was set with a fine damask cloth and handsome china, and furnished with an abundance of cakes, preserves, and dried beef, which looked so tempting to Tabby's hungry eyes, that she could hardly keep her paws off them. There was no one in the room but Polly, who was tending the baby, and keeping an eye on the biscuits, which were baking in the stove-oven. The door was half-opened into the parlor, and lights and voices proclaimed that Mrs. Webster's company had arrived.

"Oh!" thought Tabby, "if I could only have a little bit of that cake or some of that beef, or even a scrap of bread!"

This was not a very good thought for a hungry kitten to cherish in sight of a well-furnished table; and the said table being left for the moment without any guard, she mounted upon a chair, and carefully abstracted a small piece of beef, which she thought would not be missed. She had hardly jumped down with her prize, and secreted herself behind the closet-door, before Mrs. Webster entered the room. Tabby shrunk into the smallest possible compass, and was careful not to make the least particle of noise in devouring her morsel, which seemed, from its smallness, to increase her hunger, as it certainly did her thirst. Mrs. Webster cast a vigilant eye upon the table, altered the arrangement of things a little, and then proceeded to take the biscuits out of the oven, and to make tea. This done, she washed her hands, settled her very handsome silk dress and head-

dress a little, and invited the ladies who were her guests, to sit down. Polly did not make her appearance, but staid in the bed-room to tend the baby, and Mr. Webster had not come in. Indeed, he rather avoided his wife's tea-parties, for he did not particularly like her fine friends, and could not help thinking that they sometimes amused themselves at her attempts to be genteel, in which conjecture he was perfectly right, at least so far as Mrs. Cox was concerned.

"I had a call from one of your neighbors the other day, Mrs. Webster," said Mrs. Cox, as she was buttering her biscuit.

"From one of my neighbors?" repeated Mrs. Webster. "Who could it be? I did not know that there was any one here who visited you."

"No more nor less than Mrs. Bond, the policeman's lady," replied Mrs. Cox, laughing heartily. "Only think how honored I felt!"

"You don't mean to say that woman actually came to call on you!" said Mrs. Webster, in a

tone intended to express the utmost surprise at the said woman's audacity.

"She certainly did. I thought she came on an errand at first, of course, and waited patiently to find out what she wanted, not dreaming, of course, that she intended a visit. I did not even ask her to sit down, but she helped herself to a chair, and sat talking as freely as you please. Presently there was a ring at the door, and in walked Mrs. Lamb. I felt ashamed enough, I can tell you, especially as Mrs. Bond never offered to go, but sat talking in her calico frock and hood, as composed as if she were the grandest lady in the land. However, I took care to tell Mrs. Lamb, after she had gone, that she was only a poor person who had come on an errand."

"I suppose you will hardly return her call," said Mrs. Webster, and both the *ladies* laughed, as though the idea was a very ridiculous one. "She is always running in here," continued Mrs. Webster, "and, I am sorry to say, my Marianne

has got up a wonderful intimacy with her oldest daughter. I have tried to break it up, but find it difficult, as they go to school together, and are in the same class in Sunday-school. I think it has a very unfavorable effect upon Marianne's manners."

"I never allow *my* children to associate with *common* children," said Mrs. Cox, drawing herself up. "There are only two families on the street that I permit them to play with at all. I should not think I was performing the duties of a parent if I allowed them to form improper associations."

"I saw your Fred out in the barn with Tom Bond the other day," said the other lady, who had hitherto been rather silent. "They were amusing themselves with stoning a kitten that was making its way through the snow—at least Fred was, for I did not see Tom throw any thing. I think the Bond children very nice, well-trained little things, for my part."

"I think you must be mistaken, Mrs. Randall," said Mrs. Cox, coloring, and looking extremely

offended. "My Frederick is too obedient to his parents' commands, to form improper associations in a surreptitious manner, and he and his brothers have been particularly enjoined to avoid any intimacy with the Bonds."

"I think I shall take some more decided steps to break off Marianne's intimacy with them," remarked Mrs. Webster; "and I certainly shall discourage Mrs. Bond's running in here as often as she does. It is very disagreeable."

"What a mean woman!" thought Tabby. "Just as if I did not hear her send Polly over there to borrow things, at least three times this morning."

But if even Tabby's indignation was roused, we may be sure Polly's was, to the boiling-point. She could only find relief by talking to herself.

"Yes, it is all very well to talk about breaking off with the Bonds. I wonder who went over to Mrs. Bond's yesterday, to get her to cut out a cap for Tommy, and staid all the morning, though

Mrs. Bond's baby was sick, and she was just as busy as she could be, washing? And who sends to her for all sorts of things, every day in the week? I should think they would be ashamed."

But Mrs. Cox was holding forth again, in her oratorical tones.

"Yes, we always dine late—at four o'clock. I would not dine a moment earlier on any account. Mr. Cox comes home from the counting-house at that time, and I always intend to have my dinner ready, and of the best quality. We usually have soup. Mr. Cox is exceedingly fond of soup and dessert;" which Mrs. Cox pronounced *desert*, as though she had meant a sandy waste. "Mr. Cox says he enjoys his dessert more than all the rest of his dinner. Mrs. Lamb dines at six o'clock, but as Mr. Cox is obliged at present to return to the counting-house at five, that hour is not convenient for him."

"There she goes!" said Polly. "I never saw Mrs. Cox in the world, that she did not say some-

thing about dinner. I must say, I don't think it is very genteel to talk so much about eating and drinking."

Mrs. Webster now offered her guests a bit of the smoked halibut which she had been reserving for this grand occasion. Mrs. Randall accepted it, and expressed herself fond of it, but Mrs. Cox declined.

"I never eat such things at tea," she said in her emphatic and decided manner. "Relishes for tea are entirely out of fashion, quite out of date in fact, and so are warm biscuits. They are considered by many very unwholesome, and Mr. Cox never eats them at tea. This bread and butter is all the go," she concluded elegantly. "Mrs. Lamb has this bread and butter."

"Well, I call that polite!" thought Tabby; "just after she has been eating them!"

Poor Mrs. Webster! The want of the goblets and silver forks was nothing to this. After she had taken such pains to provide nice light biscuits,

and had cut her dried beef so thin, and cooked her halibut to a turn, to be told upon a Mrs. Lamb's high authority, indorsed by a Mrs. Cox, that relishes were out of fashion, and that *nobody* ate hot rolls! She felt herself reduced to the level of a nobody at once.

"Indeed, I think the biscuits are very nice," said quiet Mrs. Randall, helping herself to another, "and so is the fish. What signifies whether things are fashionable or not, so long as they are good and convenient?"

But Mrs. Webster was not to be consoled by one who held such heterodox doctrine as this, and applied herself to Mrs. Cox with the intention of gaining such further information as should prevent her making such fatal mistakes in future.

"And for breakfast, Mrs. Cox? What do you think about breakfast?"

"Oh! hot rolls for breakfast by all means, and toast and eggs, and fried potatoes. Mr. Cox is very fond of fried potatoes."

"And buckwheat cakes?" inquired Mrs. Webster.

"Why, yes, I suppose so. Don't you think buckwheat cakes are admissible, Mrs. Randall?"

Mrs. Randall had what Mrs. Cox called very high connections, and she secretly looked up to her on that account, though she considered her as a strange, unaccountable woman, who was not ashamed to have it known that she made vests for the tailors.

"They are very good, at any rate," replied Mrs. Randall; "but Mrs. Cox," she continued mischievously, "don't you know that potatoes are not at all fashionable for breakfast?"

Mrs. Cox was struck with consternation. She thought Mrs. Randall must know, because she often visited her aunt in New-York, who was a very great lady indeed, and she had actually another aunt in England, who had married a baronet's son, and would be called Lady Selden when her husband's father died. To be sure, Mr. Ran-

dall worked in the furnace himself, though he had an interest in the concern, and Mrs. Randall did not keep any girl; but then the baronet's son and the fashionable aunt made up for all these things, and she felt that her opinion was not to be slighted.

"So you don't have potatoes for breakfast! Well, I must allow they do seem out of place."

"Oh! yes, we do, and worse than that. My husband will always have cold baked beans when he can get them, and he is very fond of a raised doughnut with his coffee. So you see we are not models, at all, Mrs. Webster."

"I like that woman," said Tabby to herself. "I wish I knew where she lived, and I would go there to-morrow. As for that other woman, she is just fit to be the mother of that hateful boy who threw the apple at me."

"Much she knows about gentility!" was Polly's comment. "Mrs. Bond is as good as she is, any day, and ten times as much of a lady. I should

like to know why she should not call on Mrs. Cox if she wants to, though why she should want to, *I* can't imagine. And for mother to talk so about her, when she is forever sending there for things, and getting Mrs. Bond to do things for her, and to help her about her work! I would not ask favors of people that I was ashamed of associating with, for my part."

Polly's soliloquy was interrupted by a call to supper, and having at last succeeded in getting the baby to sleep, she laid him on the bed, sitting by him a few moments to pat and hush him; for she loved her little brother dearly, and never grudged the time she spent in tending him. Meanwhile, Tabby was left alone in the kitchen. The table was still standing, with its attractive-looking plates of meat and cakes, and the cellar-door was open. The temptation was too much for Tabby. She sprang upon the table, and Mrs. Webster, coming in from the other room, was just in time to see Tabby finish a drink out of the cream-

pitcher, and seize the piece of fish in her mouth. She sprang forward, but the four feet were too nimble for her two, and puss and fish vanished through the cellar-door.

"What a naughty kitten!" some of my young readers will doubtless exclaim. "I don't care what becomes of such a little thief."

It is doubtless very naughty to steal, but let me ask you one question: Were you ever in all your life very hungry? I dare say you have been hungry enough to have your dinner or supper taste very good to you, but did you ever go without food till your head turned round with giddiness, and ached as though it would split, and your limbs trembled, and your eyes seemed full of black and green spots, and there was a pain in your stomach as though a rat was gnawing through it? Unless you have some time been as hungry as this, you can hardly form a correct estimate of the temptation presented to poor Tabby, who had been almost entirely without food for thirty-six

hours. Suppose you had eaten nothing since yesterday morning at breakfast, and had been more than half that time out of doors, with the thermometer below zero! And then suppose, that under such circumstances, you had been left alone in the room with a piece of cake, what do you suppose would become of the cake?

I am not saying that it was not wrong for Tabby to steal. It was very wrong, and very short-sighted, besides; for Polly had fully intended to divide her own supper with the kitten, in which case not only would she have fared the better, but she would have escaped the consequences of her theft, which as we shall see, came near proving very disastrous. Some misgivings, indeed, passed through Tabby's own mind, as she was devouring her prize behind the pork-barrel, whither she had fled for safety.

"I know mother would say I ought not to have taken it," she said to herself; "but I was so hungry, it seemed as though I could not wait another

minute. Well, they will not do any thing to me to-night, because of the company, and to-morrow it will go hard but I will find some way of escape."

But Tabby reckoned without her host. Mrs. Cox and Mrs. Randall took their leave about half-past seven; and no sooner were they gone, than Mrs. Webster descended to the cellar, armed with broom and candle, drove Tabby from her place of refuge, and after more than once chasing her round the cellar, seized her by the back of the neck, and, despite her struggles and scratches, bore her to the upper air. Tabby mewed piteously, and Polly cried and expostulated; but all in vain. Mrs. Webster carried her to the fence, and called: "David."

A rough-looking man, with a pipe in his mouth, made his appearance from the next house, which was not much more than a shanty.

"Here, I want you to take this cat, and throw her over the bridge. I will give you an old bag

to tie her in, and be sure you put a good heavy stone in it. Do it directly, and I will give you six-pence."

The bag was produced and handed to David, who promised to execute the command, and poor Tabby soon found herself enveloped in a warm, ill-smelling old bag, and going she knew not whither, or, rather, alas! she knew too well. In all her previous adventures, she had never given up the expectation of reaching home, and seeing all her dear friends again; but now hope itself seemed to forsake her. Her head whirled round. All sorts of confused thoughts and images passed through her mind: of the happy home she had deserted so willfully; of the kind and self-sacrificing mother who had tended her from her birth, and never thought she could do too much for her, and whom she had rewarded with such base ingratitude; of the dear little brother, who loved her in spite of her unkindness to him. She seemed to see herself a little helpless being, unable to move a limb in her own defense, or even to get her eyes

wide open, and her good mother watching and guarding her with the tenderest solicitude. Then when she began to creep out of her basket, and play about with Tody, how careful her mother was to keep her out of danger, and how many hours she had spent in amusing her, and teaching her the use of her limbs; how she had always given her the best morsels on their common plate, and how much pains she had taken to teach her to catch mice for herself. Remembrances of Ella and Marian, and all their kindness, of Tessy's affection and Agnes Warrington's cruelty, mingled with these reflections, and all seemed confusedly mixed up with Carlo's bark and the neighing of horses, with the conversation she had lately heard, and the sobs and entreaties of Polly, interceding with her hard-hearted mother for the life of her favorite. In the midst of it all, she heard a rushing sound—knew that the river was near—felt a sudden shock, and a swift descent, and lost all consciousness as the cold waters closed over her head, apparently forever.

CHAPTER SEVENTH.

THE POLICE OFFICE.

In a few moments Tabby recovered her senses, astonished to find herself still alive. Alive she certainly was, though thoroughly wet and cold, and entirely in the dark. She heard the water rushing around her, and at first she thought she was floating down the stream; but a minute or two of observation convinced her that she must be stationary, and, with her usual energy of character, she began to make some desperate struggles to get out. After much fruitless scratching and biting, she at last succeeded in making a hole, through which she thrust, first her paws, then her head, and finally her whole body. As soon as she was out of her prison, she looked around, and

discovered to what she owed her preservation. David, who, as usual, was more than half-tipsy, had forgotten to put a stone in the bag, which had consequently floated instead of sinking, and being swept down by the rapid current, had lodged upon a long tongue of ice, which projected from the shore.

But Tabby did not spend much time in observation, for she felt that her situation was a very precarious one; and miserable as she was, the instinct of self-preservation was strong within her. After two or three ineffectual attempts, she got upon her feet, and began slowly and cautiously to make her way toward the land. The ice was wet and slippery, and perhaps no other animal than a cat could have kept her footing upon it; even Tabby found some difficulty in doing so, and had several falls, at each of which she gave herself up for lost, till she found she was not in the water, when she would again raise herself and struggle on. She had almost reached the shore, when she

heard a loud crack and felt a concussion, and the piece of ice slowly separated from the bank, and began to float down the stream. Tabby made one more effort for life. Collecting all the small remains of her strength, she made a desperate spring, and, much to her astonishment, found herself safe ly on dry land, while the ice which had been the means of saving her life sailed rapidly down the current.

"Well done, little pussy!" said a not unkind voice near her. "That wasn't a bad jump. A moment more, and you would have been a goner."

Tabby looked up in amazement. The speaker was a boy of twelve or thirteen years old, very poorly dressed in ragged and coarse clothes, and with an indescribable air of forlornness about him. He was sitting on a log by the side of the river, and seemed to have been employed in watching her efforts, for he added: "I didn't think, when I first spied you out there, that you would ever get safe to land. Come here and let me dry you off,

Jack Webster.

or you'll freeze to death. Poor little toad! It isn't so nice to be out in a winter's night with nothing to eat, and no place to go to—is it, pussy?"

Rough-looking subject as the boy was, his tone of sympathy attracted Tabby at once. She crept up to him with some difficulty, for she was growing very cold and stiff, and made a feeble attempt to jump upon his knee. He took her up tenderly enough, and after rubbing her as dry as he could with a very ragged handkerchief, he put her in his breast, and buttoned his loose jacket over her. His kindness and the genial warmth revived poor Tabby's fast-failing strength, and as the chill passed off her benumbed limbs, she began feebly to purr her thanks.

"I dare say you are as hungry as I am," said the boy, patting her head, which she was rubbing against his chin: "but I have nothing to give you, pussy. But never mind, I guess we can stand it till morning, and then if I get any thing to eat, you shall go shares. Hallo!"

At this moment a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and looking up, he saw a policeman standing behind him. He rose rather hastily, and Tabby shrank into her place of concealment.

"Now, my lad, what are you doing here?" was the policeman's first question.

"Nothing!" was the short answer.

"You have chosen a cold place to do it in, seems to me. Why don't you go home?"

"For the best reason in the world: because I have no home to go to."

"That's bad, certainly," said Mr. Bond, not unkindly. "But haven't you any place where you stay?"

"No," was the answer, in a voice which trembled a little. "I don't know a living soul in this place."

"How did you come here, then?" was the natural question.

"I came here from Buffalo yesterday. My father and mother are dead, and I haven't got any

one to take care of me, or teach me any thing, and I want"—he paused a little, and then went on more firmly—"I want to go to the House of Refuge."

"To the House of Refuge," repeated the police man, rather taken aback. "Well, I have taken a good many boys to the House of Refuge in my time, but I don't remember of any one's wanting to go of his own accord. But you know that's where they take the bad boys—you an't a bad boy, are you?"

"I suppose I am," said the child, without looking up. "Every body says so, and when I come to think about it, I guess they are about right."

"You come along with me," said Mr. Bond, "and we'll see what can be done for you. You can't stay out all night, that's certain, because you'll freeze to death, and we can't have people freezing to death in our streets."

"So you want to get an education, do you?" said he, as they trudged along together, the boy

having some trouble to keep up with the long strides of his tall companion. "Well, an education is a first-rate thing, there's no doubt about that; I tell my boys and girls so, when they get a little tired of going to school. If I had had the chance that you have, says I, I should have been glad enough of it."

"If I had had any one to send me to school, I don't think I should ever have been tired of it," said the boy, rather sadly.

"Oh! well, cheer up. May be there's better days coming. It never rains always, you know, and I'll tell you what—what did you say your name was?"

"Jack Fletcher!" was the answer.

"Well, Jack, it's half the battle with a boy, or a man, either, for that matter, to make a good resolution. You say you an't a good boy, eh?"

"No," replied Jack. "I haven't had much chance to be good. My father and mother both drank," he continued, after a little pause, and

lowering his voice, "and one day my mother drank so much, that she got crazy and killed herself. Then my father was taken up for murdering her, and put in jail, and there he took sick and died. He was sober then, of course, and when I went to see him, he—he told me to go off to some place where I wasn't known, and try to make an honest living. I knew a boy who had been to the House of Refuge, and he told me how they learned trades there, and what kind of times they had, and I thought that would be just the place for me. So I begged a passage on a freight-car, and got here yesterday."

"But suppose you could get a place to learn a trade without going there, wouldn't you like that better?" asked Mr. Bond.

"I don't know about that," replied Jack thoughtfully. "I am afraid I should not be steady. You see I have been brought up to run in the street all day long, and it's kind of hard to settle down to work, unless one is obliged to.

Like as not, I should get into some scrape, and do something bad, and so have to be put there, and I would rather go of my own accord."

"That's very sensible, too," replied Mr. Bond. "Well, here we are at the police-office, and I dare say you won't be sorry to get warm. It is a bitter night."

"Hallo, Bond, what have you got there?" was the salutation that greeted them, as they entered the room, where the gas-light and coal-fire gave out an amount of light and warmth which seemed little short of miraculous to Tabby, who had all the time remained close under Jack's arm. "He don't look like a very dangerous customer."

"It's a boy that says he wants to go to the House of Refuge," said Mr. Bond, setting a stool by the side of the fire as he spoke. "Here, Jack, sit down and get warm. You must be about frozen through, I should think."

Jack was glad to sit down, for his knees trembled, and he felt a strange sensation creeping

over him which was not exactly sleepiness or fatigue. He had been seated only a moment, when the lights seemed to grow dim and the voices indistinct—his head dropped on his bosom, and one of the men sprang forward and caught him just in time to prevent his falling on the floor. The boy had fainted away. They laid him on a settee that stood at a distance from the fire, brought water and sprinkled his face, and one of them unbuttoned his jacket.

"Hallo, here's two of them," said he, as poor Tabby became visible, vainly trying to shrink out of sight. "He's got his cat here. Whittington and his cat. Well, I've seen lots of cats out at nights, but this is the first time I ever heard of one being taken up for a vagrant."

"Don't hurt her, please," feebly pleaded Jack, who was now recovering his senses.

"Don't you be scared! Who wants to hurt her? But I say, Bond, you'll make a great figure in the report to-morrow. Officer Bond arrested a

tortoise-shell kitten on a charge of vagrancy. The kitten was accompanied by a small boy—how do you feel now, Bub?"

"Better," said Jack faintly, but he could not raise his head without turning giddy. Mr. Bond and his companion exchanged glances.

"Have you had any supper, Jack?"

"No, sir!"

"Nor dinner either, perhaps?"

"No, nor breakfast either," said Jack, exerting himself to speak. "I haven't had any thing to eat since yesterday noon, when a lady gave me some bread and butter."

"You just hand me that pail behind you, Foster. My wife put me up some soup for my supper, and it will be just the thing for him." He set the pail on the stove, and proceeded to break some crackers into it. "But why didn't you go in somewhere, and ask for something to eat, sonny? Almost any one would have given you a dinner."

"I didn't want to beg if I could help it," said Jack rather shortly. "I have had enough of that way of living."

"That's a good principle, too," said Mr. Bond, taking his cookery from the stove, and tasting it. "Now see if you can sit up and eat something."

"May I feed the kitten?" asked Jack, after he had taken a couple of mouthsful of the savory soup. "I expect she is as hungry as I am."

"You eat your supper and I'll take care of the cat," said Mr. Foster, taking down his own supper-pail, and apparently greatly amused by the whole affair—"Here, Puss, Puss!"

Tabby had been sadly frightened at first, on finding herself in the police-office, a place which she had learned to connect with all manner of harm, but she had by this time made up her mind that police-officers were very kind-hearted people, and worthy of confidence. She came forth from her hiding-place, under Jack's arm, and sat up on her hind-legs to beg, greatly to the

amusement of the two men, who fed her with bread and cold meat, till she could eat no more. She then set seriously about the task of washing herself, and having put her fur in as neat order as she could, proceeded to make herself as agreeable as she knew how, playing off for the entertainment of her hosts all the antics that her mother and the children had taught her, till finally, wearied out by her adventures, she crept up to the side of Jack, who was now snoring on the settee, and was soon fast asleep.

"O my dear mother!" was her last waking reflection, "what would you say if you knew that your daughter was spending the night in the police-office?"

"Well, Jack, have you had your sleep out?" asked Mr. Bond, about half-past six the next morning. "If you have, I think you had better come home with me, and get some breakfast, and then we will see what is to be done with you. Never mind your clothes," he added, seeing Jack

carefully surveying his torn and ragged garments. "We will find a way to set that to rights before long."

"May I take the cat?" asked Jack, looking wistfully at Tabby, who sat purring by the stove. "I kind of hate to leave her. When I saw her crawling over the ice, last night, trying to make her way to land, I thought she was a good deal like me, trying to make a living, and when she made that last jump across the creek, and got safe to shore, I felt kind of encouraged, as though things would go right with me yet."

"Oh! yes, bring her along," said Mr. Bond, who seemed all at once to have got something in the corner of his eye. "My children like nothing better than a kitten. Children have got to play with something, and I have a notion that it makes them tender-hearted to have animals about."

"Unless they abuse them," remarked Jack as he fastened Tabby under his jacket again. "Some young ones are so awful cruel to cats and dogs."

"Not mine!" said Mr. Bond emphatically. "I never would let any child abuse an animal if I could help it. But my children are pretty good children, though I say it."

Jack thought within himself that they had no excuse for being otherwise, and intimated as much.

"Well, I don't know about that. There is a wonderful deal in bringing up, no doubt, but there are many children who have good and kind mothers and fathers, and yet turn out any thing but well. We have had young chaps brought to the office as drunk as beasts, whose parents are some of the first as well as the best people in this town."

"They must be great fools," said Jack.

"That they are, and worse than fools. Some of them reform, and make pretty decent sort of men, after all, but the chances are very much against it. A great many go to swift destruction, and even if they seem to do well for a time, they easily fall into sad courses again. We hear a

good deal about young fellows sowing their wild oats. I have seen a good deal of that kind of farming, and I can tell you, that folks that sow wild oats have got to reap wild oats, and a bitter harvest it is, too. A reformed drunkard is never safe. The first temptation oversets him, and there are plenty of rascals who want no better fun than to set him so."

"I know that," said Jack. "My father broke off drinking several times, and was as steady as any one for two or three months. Then we did pretty well, for he was an excellent workman, and could always have plenty to do. But sooner or later, his old cronies would get hold of him, and coax or force him to drink, and the moment he tasted a drop, he was gone. I think he might have done better, if things had been different at home, but there was not much encouragement, when all he earned was wasted, and worse. Many's the time I've wished there was not a drop of spirits in the world."

"Many a one has wished that besides you," said Mr. Bond. "But here we are at home in good time. I smell the coffee and fried pork, clear out here."

Mr. Bond, as he spoke, stopped at the gate of a neat little white house, with green blinds, and a garden in front, every inch of which seemed to be under cultivation. Three or four little heads were visible at the front windows, all of which disappeared on the instant, each one trying to be first to tell mother that father had come, and a strange boy with him. Mrs. Bond met them at the door, and the first glance at her kind motherly face reässured poor Jack, who had had many misgivings as to the reception he was likely to meet with. Mr. Bond spoke a few words to her in a low tone, and then turning to Jack, invited him to enter.

"Yes, come in, boy, and get some breakfast," said Mrs. Bond heartily. "You'd like to wash yourself first, I dare say—well, come right in

here," opening, as she spoke, the door of a small bed-room, already put in neat order for the day. "I'll give you some hot water and soap directly. Tom, you get that suit of clothes I mended up the other day. I think they will about fit him."

Washed, and combed, and dressed in a suit of old, but neatly patched clothes, Jack was a very different looking boy from the forlorn vagrant who had been brought to the police-office the night before. The consciousness of having found friends, and being treated with kindness, had brought a light to his eye, and a different expression to his mouth, and Mr. Bond felt his first impression confirmed, that he was a very good-looking boy.

"You see," he had just been saying to his wife, "I have had a good deal of experience with these subjects, and I think I can tell pretty well when a boy is telling the truth, and when he is not. Now, I took a liking to this fellow from the first, and I did not think any the worse of him

for his kindness to the kitten. Come, Jack, if you are ready; put the cat under the stove for the present."

All the children were seated in the neat kitchen, where the breakfast-table was already set, each with a New Testament in his hand, and the large family Bible was laid open on the table, ready for the father's use.

"You can look over with Tom," said Mrs. Bond, pointing Jack to a seat next a boy of about his own age. "Never mind," she added, seeing a flush rise to Jack's face, and guessing at once that he could not read. "You can listen to the rest."

Each of the children read a verse in turn from the Gospel of St. Matthew, and their father finished the chapter. Then all together sang a couple of verses from a hymn to a familiar tune, and all kneeled down while Mr. Bond prayed, every little voice joining in the Lord's Prayer at the last. It was the first time Jack had ever seen family worship, though he had heard of such a thing,

and when in the course of the prayer, he heard himself alluded to in terms that he could not mistake, his eyes filled and he had hard work to keep from sobbing aloud.

"Come now, Sarah Anne, let's have breakfast right off." said Mrs. Bond, in the same cheerful tones, after prayers were over; "I am rather behindhand, for I was over at Mrs. Cox's till about three o'clock, and I rather overslept myself this morning."

"What took you over to Mrs. Cox's?" asked Mr. Bond. "I thought you said you would never go into the house again."

"No more I would, to visit," said Mrs. Bond, busily turning her buckwheat cakes, "because the last time I was there, she showed me plainly that she didn't want me, and of course I wouldn't visit where it was considered an intrusion. But one of her children was taken with the croup, and she thought he was going to die directly. So she

sent the girl over for me, and of course under such circumstances I went."

"Taking the bottle of goose-grease?" interrupted her husband, laughing.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Bond, laughing in her turn. "That's my cure-all for the croup, you know, and it answered a very good purpose, for the boy was relieved very soon. But she was so frightened, and so sort of helpless, that I did not like to leave her alone with him, till he seemed entirely out of danger. You would be surprised to see how little presence of mind she had. She did nothing but talk, and cry, and wring her hands, till I was downright out of patience with her."

"I should not be surprised at all," replied Mr. Bond. "I should not expect her to be good for much. She is too grand a talker for that. But I am glad you were able to be of use to her. Now let us have our breakfast, if it is ready."

There was much merry chat at the table, between the children and their parents, the uplifted finger of the mother serving as a check if any of the little ones seemed likely to become too noisy. Meantime, Tabby, seated under the stove, made her observations upon the family, and compared them in her own mind with other groups of children she had seen in her travels. They were all nicely but plainly dressed, the girls in dark woollen or calico frocks, with white aprons, the boys in coarse gray cloth, with here and there a patch on knee or elbow. Mrs. Bond herself was as nice as any lady Tabby had ever seen, in her dark calico frock, muslin cap, and plain white linen collar. No slip-shod shoes, or stockings out at the heel, had a place in her morning toilet; as she expressed it, she liked to be always fit to be seen. Her table furniture was all cheap, but neat and well-matched, and the brown cloth was without a stain. Tabby thought of the Warringtons, where the beautiful French china and shining silver of the breakfast-

table were surrounded by cross faces and angry voices, and again of Mrs. Webster, with her cracked tea-cups and battered tin-ware for her own family, and the fine china and glass for company; and she decided that if she could not go home, she would rather live here than in any family she had seen in her wanderings.

When breakfast was over, each child set about his or her several tasks, with an alacrity and cheerfulness that showed they did not consider work any hardship. The mother took up the baby, and dressed her by the fire; Sarah Anne and Jenny put on their long checked pinafores, pinned up their sleeves, and washed the dishes; Samuel cleaned the knives and swept off the front steps and side-walk, and Tom set himself about sawing wood. A plate was set down for Tabby, who made a hearty breakfast, and then began, after the custom of cats, to explore her new abode.

"Can't I help you do that?" said Jack, going into the shed where Tom was at work. "I know

how to saw wood. Suppose you let me saw while you split."

"You may in welcome," returned Tom, resigning the saw and taking up the axe. "I should like to get it all done to-day if I can, for school begins again to-morrow, and then I shall not have so much time."

"Do you go to school?" said Jack. "I wish I did."

When two boys are at work together, it does not generally take them very long to become acquainted. Before the half-cord of wood was finished, and piled up, and the chips disposed of, they had learned all of each other's history from first to last, and made their own reflections thereon. Jack had made up his mind to be a good boy at any rate, and try to get such an education as should enable him to make his way in the world; while Tom secretly came to the conclusion that he had not valued his advantages as highly as they deserved, and, resolved that he would never again

complain of being kept in school all the term, and not allowed to be in the street of an evening, which he had sometimes thought rather a hard case.

Meantime, Mr. Bond had been holding a consultation with his wife, as to what was to be done with Jack, in whom he felt more and more interested, the more closely he observed him. Mrs. Bond thought it rather a pity the boy should go to the House of Refuge, and believed some place might be provided, where he could have a home and be out of harm's way, without submitting to quite so severe a rule. Mr. Bond, on his part, considered that Jack took the right view of the case.

"You have not seen so much of these street children as I have," he remarked. "They get so much attached to their wandering way of life, miserable as it seems, that it appears almost impossible to give it up. This boy has probably many bad habits, which it will take some time, and very

likely some pains, to cure. He will be well off there as far as food and clothes are concerned, and out of the way of bad associations, at the same time that he will be learning what will be useful to him hereafter."

"He seems inclined to work," said Mrs. Bond. "See how much he is engaged about helping Tom with the wood."

"True; he works well, but you must remember that it is a new thing to him, and hard labor will seem very different after the novelty is worn off, and it becomes an every day matter. You know it is much easier to work for one day or two than for a month or a year."

"That's true!" assented Mrs. Bond. She sat thinking a few moments, while her fingers were busily engaged upon the shoe she was binding. "I think if I were you, husband," she added after a little, "I would go and consult Mr. Merriam. You know he has had a great deal of experience in such matters, and he is one of the Governors

of the House of Refuge. I think he will be able to tell you what is the best course to take."

Mr. Bond thought this a very good idea, and acted upon it at once; first exacting a promise from Jack, that he would not leave the premises till his return. Jack gave the required pledge very readily, for he felt in no hurry to leave a place where he had been so kindly treated. Tabby, for her part, felt in a tremor of undefined expectation. She had heard Mr. Bond say where he was going, and she could not help hoping that it would in some way come to pass that she should be returned to her home.

CHAPTER EIGHT.

CONCLUSION.

When Mr. Bond arrived at Mr. Merriam's, the family were at breakfast, and he was invited into the dining-room. He knew Mr. and Mrs. Merriam well, having often had business with them relating to street children, for whom they were much interested, and Sarah Anne and the little girls were in the same class in Sunday-school.

"Will you take a cup of coffee, Mr. Bond?" asked Mrs. Merriam kindly. "This is a cold morning."

Mr. Bond thanked her, but declined upon the ground of having just risen from the breakfast-table, and then entered upon the subject of his errand, to which the little girls listened with as much attention as their parents, for they had been

early accustomed to take an interest in whatever concerned the welfare of poor people and their children, and Ella and Marian had their own little girl, as they called her, a little colored orphan at the Home for the Friendless, for whom they made clothes, and sometimes bought playthings.

"It is a singular case," said Mr. Merriam, as Mr. Bond concluded his story. "I never met with one exactly like it in all my experience. "Certainly the boy's resolution shows a great deal of strength of character."

"Especially as he knows what to expect," remarked Miss Fanny. "Mr. Bond says he has talked with a boy who has been in the house, so that he understands that it is a place of strict discipline and hard labor."

"That seems to be just what attracts him," replied Mr. Bond. "He says very honestly that he is not a good boy, and that he knows he shall not be steady unless he is obliged to be."

"What do you think of his appearance?" in-

quired Mrs. Merriam. "You are pretty well accustomed to judge of such cases."

"I like his looks very well," replied Mr. Bond. "He looks one straight in the face when he speaks, which is a very good sign, and he seems ready enough to take hold of any work that comes along. I left him helping my son to saw and split wood, and working very hard, though, of course, there is no knowing how long it will last. One little thing which happened last night, gave me a good idea of his disposition, and he proceeded to relate the story of his saving the kitten, to which the children listened with much interest.

"What sort of kitten was it?" asked Ella as the account was concluded.

"Why, I am not very learned about cats," replied Mr. Bond, smiling; "but I believe I heard my little girls call it a tabby, or tortoise-shell."

Ella and Marian looked at each other, and Ella gave a little jump in her chair, as she was apt to do under any excitement.

"O mamma! perhaps it is our very own kitten."

"That is not very likely," said Mrs. Merriam. "Poor Tabby's troubles are probably all at an end, long before this time."

"But it might be, mamma—it is possible," argued Ella. "You know kittens live through a great deal, and Tabby had so much spirit."

And the two little girls began to overwhelm Mr. Bond with inquiries about the kitten's ears, feet, and tail—questions which he could not answer very minutely, being more accustomed to observe the outward appearance of vagrants than of cats.

"But I will tell you what you can do," he said good-naturedly, seeing how much the children were interested. "You can go down to my house, and see the kitten, and if it turns out to be yours, you can bring it home. I think that will be the best way to manage."

"May we, mamma?" asked both the children at once.

"You know you have the double-gown to finish for little Chloe," said Mrs. Merriam. "You were going to take it to her to-day, and she really needs it very much, for Mrs. S. tells me she is not able to sit up a great deal now."

"But that will not take long, mamma, and we will sit right down to it as soon as we have finished our work. Then we can carry it to her after dinner, you know, and come home by the way of Mr. Bond's. It is only a very little bit further."

The kind mother consented to this arrangement, and Mr. Bond took his leave, promising to bring Jack Fletcher to Mr. Merriam's office in the course of the morning. No sooner was breakfast over, and their daily task of sweeping and dusting completed, than Ella and Marian sat down to finish the double-gown; and though they were both reasonably good seamstresses for their ages, their little fingers never flew faster than now.

"Oh! if it should be our own precious darling

kitten, how glad I should be!" said Ella. "I wish we knew for certain, for you know in a city like this, there may be a great many Tabby cats besides ours."

"We won't tell the old cat any thing about it till we are sure," said Marian considerately; "and then she won't be disappointed. I wonder if she will be glad to see her again?"

"To be sure she will," returned Ella rather indignantly. "You don't suppose she is going to forget her own kitten in a week, do you? How glad I shall be to see them all together at play again. O you dear little Tody! you don't know what a nice New-Year's present you are going to have perhaps"—and Ella suspended her work for a moment to hug Tody, who had just that moment come in, and wondered what in the world his little mistress could mean. However, he was used to her ways, and did not trouble himself much about the matter, but as soon as he was released, went to chasing a spool into the corners,

and pretending it was a rat, while Ella worked with renewed diligence to make up for the moment she had lost.

The garment was finished before dinner, and neatly folded into a bundle with two pairs of warm stockings which Mrs. Merriam had found time to knit, and sundry playthings old and new, all destined for the little orphan.

The wind was cold, and drifted the snow in little clouds round the corners of the streets, and into the faces of the little girls as they went on their errand, but they were warmly wrapped up, and their hearts were too full of joyous and kindly thoughts to care if their noses did tingle a little. Merrily they proceeded on their way, laughing and talking, and stopping now and then to exchange a few words with a companion or schoolmate.

"Oh! there is Dora Warrington across the street," exclaimed Marian, as they turned a corner. "Let us go over and ask how Agnes is?"

Dora was thin and pale, but she had a pleasanter expression than when we last saw her, though she looked sad and subdued.

"She is better," she said in answer to Ella's inquiries about her sister, "but we do not think her out of danger yet. She has some very bad turns, and whenever she is out of her head, she is always talking about that kitten. I suppose you have not heard any thing of her, have you?"

"We don't know," replied Marian. "We have heard of a tortoise-shell kitten that was found last night, and we are going now to see if it is the same. Mother thinks Tabby must be dead by this time, but I can not help hoping we shall find her after all."

"I hope you will," said Dora. "I have always felt very sorry about it, and so has Agnes, I know. I don't see what possessed her to do such a spiteful thing, though, to be sure, I have been just as bad myself. I hope we shall both be better girls after this: I am sure we have had a lesson.

But, girls, if you do find her, will you come round by our house, and let us know? Agnes will be so relieved."

The girls promised to do so, and proceeded on their way. "How thin Dora is," remarked Ella. "She looks as though she had been sick herself."

"She stays with Agnes a great deal," said Marian, "and runs to wait on her mother." She was silent a few moments, and then added abruptly. "Ella, are you not glad that Mrs. Warrington is not our mother?"

"Yes, indeed," said Ella heartily. "I should not like her at all. She is so idle. But, Marian," she added, correcting herself, "you know mother does not like us to talk about the faults of older people."

"I should not object to having Miss Barbara for a sister," said Marian. "I like her very much."

"I think Agnes and Dora will get along better

after this," remarked Ella. Dora seems changed a good deal, and I should think it must make a difference in the family, having Theresa there. How neat she is, and she goes about so nicely with her little crutch. Mother says that night she sat up with Agnes, that she never saw any grown person more useful in a sick-room than Theresa. She seemed to know just what was wanted before it was asked for, and she was never in the way. I should like to be just like her when I am as old."

"You would not like to be lame," said Marian.

"No, of course, but like her in disposition, I mean. And after all, she does not seem to mind her lameness much. She is almost always in good spirits."

Thus chatting, they beguiled the length of the walk, and reached the Home for the Friendless. They found little Chloe very glad to see them, much delighted with the new clothes, and still more with a large linen doll which the girls had

covered and painted over, till it was as good as new, or better.

Chloe had been found by some kind ladies in an alley in one of the worst parts of the city, not seeming to belong to any body, but bandied about from one to another among the wretched people who lived there; sometimes getting something to eat, and sometimes not, as it happened, often cold and hungry, and always miserable. They took her to the Home, where she was washed and dressed, and tended as carefully as any lady's child; but it was too late to save her. Her constitution was destroyed by the hardships she had undergone, and all they could do for her, was to make the last hours of her short life as happy as possible. And very happy poor Chloe was. She could not play much herself, but she loved to watch the frolics of the other children, and as she never cried or was cross, she was a pet and favorite with every one in the Institution.

Even Ella and Marian, inexperienced though

they were, could see a great alteration in their little friend's appearance since they had last visited her, and it was with rather saddened hearts that they bade her good-by, thinking that they might very possibly never see her again. They turned down the street which led to Mr. Bond's, and walked on almost in silence, till they found themselves perplexed, not being quite sure about the number of the house.

"This is a nice-looking place," said Ella, as they passed a neat and somewhat ornamented dwelling. "Perhaps the people will know where the Bonds live. Let us ring and ask."

Mrs. Cox herself came to the door, and immediately recognized the children, whom she had often seen in church with their parents. Ella politely asked her if she could tell them where Mr. Bond lived.

"Mr. Bond!" repeated Mrs. Cox in surprise; "you don't mean Bond the policeman, do you?"

"Yes, ma'am, he is a policeman. Does he live near here?"

"He lives in that white house just across the street," replied Mrs. Cox. "Did your mother send you there."

Ella felt the impertinence of the question, and colored a little, but she answered politely, "Yes, ma'am; we never go any where she does not let us," and before Mrs. Cox could frame another question, the little girls were gone.

"Well, if that isn't curious," said Mrs. Cox to herself. "I should like to know what their mother could send them to Mrs. Bond's for? Something about poor people, I dare say."

She stood and watched them as they crossed the street, and to her amazement, she saw Sarah Anne run out to meet the sisters, kiss them, and draw them into the house, with every sign of affectionate and long-standing acquaintance.

"Well, if ever! I should like to see Sarah Bond kiss one of *my* children like that. It is all very well to be kind to poor people, but I must say I think something is due to one's social posi-

tion. I don't believe in being hail fellow well met with every body, just because one happens to go to church with them. I dare say it was all Mrs. Merriam's doings that Mrs. Bond was made a society visitor. But I am determined I will find out what those children are after, some way or other." With which praiseworthy resolution she turned into the house, finding it rather cold standing at the door with the thermometer at zero, even when engaged in the engrossing pursuit of watching her neighbors and their visitors.

Meantime the children had been hospitably received and seated by the stove, and their furs and over-shoes taken off, lest, as Mrs. Bond expressed it, they should not feel them when they went out.

A pale and poorly dressed girl was sitting in the corner, whom the sisters did not recognize till Mrs. Bond said: "Don't you know Polly Webster? I believe she is in your class at Sunday-school."

"Why, Polly," said Ella, at once getting up to

kiss her. "How odd that we should not know you! But we are used to seeing you with your bonnet on. I suppose that must be the reason."

Poor Polly well knew what was the reason. She had never seen the sisters except when she was "dressed up," as her mother called it, in a silk or merino frock, and a handsome and expensive bonnet and cloak, and now she was dressed in the same old and faded blue dress in which she was first introduced to our readers, and which her mother had thought plenty good enough to run in to see Sarah Bond, as long as she went the back-way, so that Mrs. Cox did not see her. She was too much mortified to finish her visit, but soon slipped out and went home more annoyed and out of patience than ever.

The girls looked eagerly around the room, but no kitten was to be seen.

"Your father told us he had found a tortoise-shell kitten," said Ella to Sarah, speaking as usual both for herself and her sister, "and as we have

lost one, mother said we might come and see if it was the same."

"To be sure," said Mrs. Bond. "I shouldn't wonder if it was. You go and get her, Sarah. Our old cat quarrelled with her," she explained, as Sarah went up-stairs, "and so I had the girls shut her up in their room, till we found out about her, for Mr. Bond said you were coming down to see her some time to-day. Be quick, Sarah!"

But Sarah had no need to hurry. Tabby had heard the well-known voices, and was mewing and scratching at the door in an agony of impatience. No sooner was it opened than she made almost one leap from the top of the stairs to the bottom, and was in Ella's lap before Sarah could come down again. No words could have more plainly expressed her joy than did Tabby's movements. She went from one to the other, purring, rubbing her head, and rolling over, and doing every thing that a cat could do, to express her delight at seeing them again.

"It is our very own dear little kitty," said Ella, examining her all over, as if to make sure of the fact, and almost crying for joy. "O you dear little naughty Tabby! how glad I am to see you again, and how glad your mother will be."

"She is just as much pleased to see you," remarked Mrs. Bond, enjoying the delight of the little girls. "She is a real pretty kitten and as cunning as ever I saw one. I don't wonder you hated to lose her. Do you want to carry her home yourselves, or shall I send Tom up with her? He had just as soon go as not, I am sure."

Tom at once professed his willingness, but the little girls declared they would not lose the pleasure of taking her home upon any account; so Mrs. Bond provided a snug basket with a cover and handle, which they could conveniently carry between them.

"But you must not go just yet," she said as she saw them look round for their capes. "Stay and rest a little." She went into the pantry as

she spoke, and presently returned with a plate of bread and butter, and another containing a beautiful piece of white honey-comb. "You must eat some bread and honey before you go," said she. "The honey is from our own bees, and I am sure your walk has made you hungry."

The girls were in a great hurry to get home, but they thought it would not be polite to refuse what Mrs. Bond had taken so much pains to provide for them; so they sat down to the table, and found, as Mrs. Bond had said, that the walk had given them an appetite. Tabby, who kept close to her mistress, was also provided with a saucer of milk, that she might not go away hungry. They had a very pleasant little visit, and after inviting Sarah Ann to come and see them, and thanking her for her care of the kitten, they took their leave. Mrs. Cox, watching from her dining-room window, saw them issue from the policeman's gate, bearing a covered basket between them, and now and then stopping to peep through the

chinks of the basket, as though highly delighted with the contents. But with the nature of its contents, Mrs. Cox was destined never to become acquainted. Mrs. Webster, to whom she looked for a solution of the mystery, was taken severely ill that afternoon, and continued so for several weeks, and by the time she was well enough to talk, Mrs. Cox was so much occupied with her own and her neighbor's house-cleaning and papering, that the affair of the basket passed out of her mind, and so it chanced, that she never found out after all, what it was that took Mrs. Merriam's girls to Mrs. Bond's, nor what they carried away with them.

Ella and Marian pursued their way merrily, only stopping as aforesaid, to peep into the basket where Tabby lay snugly coiled up, perfectly contented to be quiet in her warm quarters, as long as she was going home to her mother and Tody. They did not forget their promise to stop at Mrs. Warrington's, and inform Dora of their success.

"Dear little Tabby!" said Tessy, peeping into the basket, as Dora went up stairs to tell her sister the good news. "How glad I am she is safe; but how thin and forlorn she looks! I don't believe you will ever be so foolish as to run away again, little kitty."

"I don't believe I shall," thought Tabby; "but dear me, I hope they won't stay here long; I want to get home so, I don't know what to do. I feel as if I should fly."

But Tabby could not fly, and her patience was destined to a little longer trial, for Dora came down presently, to ask the girls to go up and see Agnes. They found her lying in bed, her beautiful curling hair all cut off close to her head, and so changed that they could hardly think it was herself. She was too weak to say much, but kissed them both, and whispered: "I am so glad she is found! You don't know how bad I have felt."

"Never mind, Aggy," said Marian with tearful

eyes. "It has all turned out well, so you need think no more about it."

"I don't think Aggy wants to forget it, Marian," remarked Theresa. "Do you, dear?"

Agnes shook her head, but she was not allowed to talk, so the girls kissed her again, and taking their leave, soon arrived at home in safety with their precious burden. As soon as they came in sight, Miss Fanny, who was watching at the parlor window, ran to let them in, knowing by their faces that they had succeeded in their search. The old cat was lying before the parlor fire with Tody, and she looked up in amazement to see Miss Fanny jump up so quickly. But she jumped up ten times more quickly herself, as Ella lifted the cover, and Tabby, thin and dirty, but still her own loved Tabby, jumped out of the basket, and threw herself into her mother's paws, while Tody capered round them in such an ecstasy of delight, that he singed his tail in the grate with-

out knowing it, and twice attempted to jump over his own head!

"Well, Tabby," said her mother, after she had given an account of all her adventures. "You have had some very narrow escapes, and seen many curious things. I hope you have learned one lesson from your adventures that you will never forget—that a kitten's own family friends are the best friends she can have, and that if she is not happy at home, it is almost always her own fault."

I suppose my young readers will like to know what became of some of the other personages of our story.

Agnes Warrington recovered after a very long and tedious confinement. She never forgot the occasion of her illness, and the lessons which it taught her, influenced the whole of her after-life. It is not easy to get over bad habits all at once, and she and Dora had a *tiff* now and then as of

old, but her long-continued feebleness prevented their coming much into collision, till Dora's good principles were too firmly rooted to be easily overthrown; and as it takes at least two to make a quarrel, Agnes became gradually ashamed of being always in the wrong. As Ella had prophesied, Theresa's influence had a good effect upon the rest of the family. She did not go to boarding-school till her cousin had entirely recovered, and by that time she had become so much endeared to her relatives, that they knew not how to part with her, and looked forward with pleasure to the time when she should have a permanent home among them.

Mrs. Webster also recovered, but only after a very long and dangerous illness, during which time her dear friend and counsellor, Mrs. Cox, never came to see her but three times, and did not once offer to assist in taking care of her; while Mrs. Bond and Mrs. Randall sat up with her night after night, looked after the house-keep-

ing, and kept the baby, when its mother was so ill as to render its absence necessary. Under such circumstances, Mrs. Webster could not fail to see who were her true friends, and rose from her sick-bed at last a wise woman: having learned the important lesson, that we should give all our attention to performing our duties at home and abroad to the best of our ability, in which case, our social position may safely be left to take care of itself. Polly now goes as neatly dressed as Sarah Bond, and is almost as happy, and Mr. Webster finds his home so much improved in cheerfulness and comfort, that he declares his doctor's bill to be the best-laid-out money he ever spent.

Jack Fletcher went to the House of Refuge, but he did not remain there long. He soon learned to read and write, and a farmer from the West, struck with his intelligent and good-humored face, and interested in his story, took him out to Iowa to live. Jack now works on the farm in

summer, and goes to school in winter, and bids fair to be as respectable a man as any in the United States. He corresponds with Tom Bond, who means to be a farmer, too, some day, and he never forgets to ask after Sarah Anne, who bids fair to be as smart and as good as her mother before her, though her father thinks she will never be as handsome.

And now having disposed of all our principal personages, we will conclude by wishing all our young friends a Merry Christmas! and a happy New Year! and bid them farewell till next season.